



KITTY OF THE ROSES

BY RALPH HENRY BARBOUR



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KITTY OF THE ROSES

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“PERHAPS I CAN HELP YOU?” SAID A VOICE ALMOST OVERHEAD

KITTY OF THE ROSES

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF "THE LAND OF JOY," ETC.

With Illustrations by

FREDERIC J. VON RAPP



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TO
MRS. JOHN W. ALLISON
OF PHILADELPHIA



ILLUSTRATIONS

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KITTY OF THE ROSES

I

THROUGH the wide-open window floated in the fragrance of dew-dripping flowers. On the edge of the table a smouldering cigarette sent up a thin, wavering filament of gray smoke that lost itself in the upper gloom of the darkened room, leaving behind it a not-unpleasing odor of the Orient to mingle with the incense from the gardens without. When he paused in his writing—and pauses were frequent—Mr. Stephen Burton's gaze invariably wandered to

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the sunlighted morning world represented by the vista at his elbow.

Immediately below him a small, turf-carpeted garden formed a square of shadow and sunlight. A jasmine

clambered and
sprawled along

the purple brick
wall at the rear,

and a narrow,
chocolate-hued

bed of moist
loam caught the

fallen blooms.

The bed held

white and purple

and lavender iris, and spiræa, and
blue pentstemon, and was bordered

with honey-flower. At the end of
the old wall, where it formed an

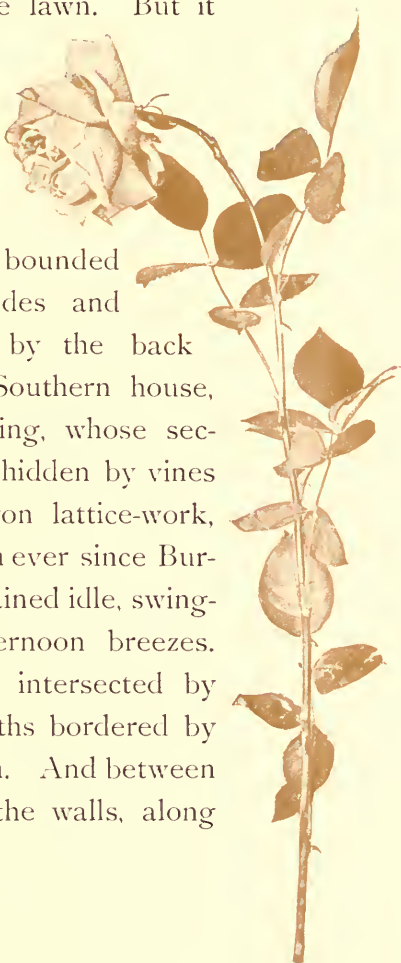
angle with an iron fence, a queerly



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shaped Daphne-tree threw grotesque shadows on the little lawn. But it was beyond the rusty iron barrier that Burton's eyes found their richest reward.

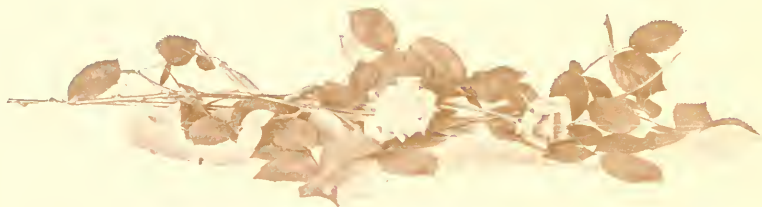
There stretched a quadrangle that was bounded by walls on two sides and at the farther end by the back of an old-fashioned Southern house, staid and sleepy-looking, whose second-story porch, half hidden by vines over white-painted iron lattice-work, held a hammock which ever since Burton's coming had remained idle, swinging lazily in the afternoon breezes. The quadrangle was intersected by narrow red gravel paths bordered by box hedges waist-high. And between the hedges, against the walls, along



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the fence, and clambering upon the house were roses. Never had Burton seen or dreamed of such roses. The garden was a riot of intense reds, of tender pinks, of flaring yellows and dazzling whites, and of every hue and tint between.

For the most part, they were the favorites of a generation gone: Bank-sias, festooning the warm bricks with bouquets of amber yellow and of violet-tinged white; Baltimore Belles, creamy-hued and graceful; rosy-violet Pride of Washingtons; sweetbriers of scarlet and blush; Austrian briers, single blossoms of flame-yellow. In the beds were great cabbage-roses of delicate, clear pink and of deep rose; moss-roses of many sorts, crimson Damasks, bright-red Luxembourgs,



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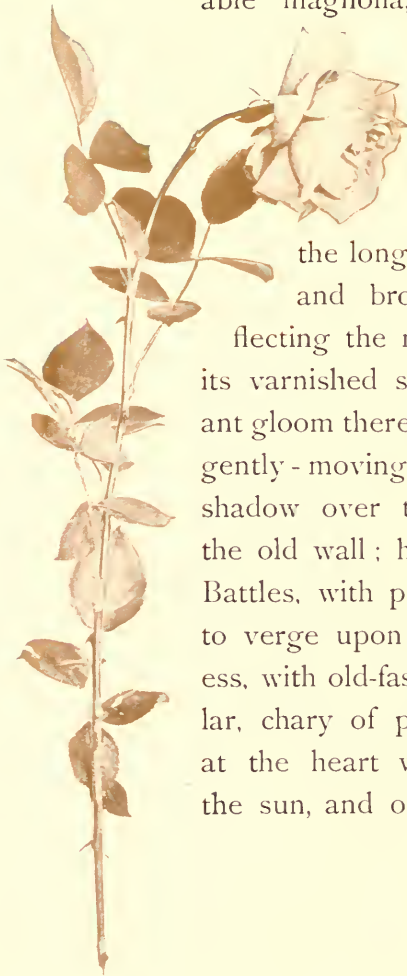
tiny clusters of flesh-colored Pompons. An immense bush of Gloire des Jardins was aflame with its great double blooms of red, while clustered about it were Madame Cottins, Philippe Quatres, Marceaus, Madame Hardys, Princess Clementines, and Madame Plantiers. The rich crimson, cup-shaped blossoms of a George the Fourth were nodding regally over the yellow-pink blooms of an Emmeline ; the brown velvet petals of a Lord Nelson were clustering above a lowly Wellington ; while, supreme in one three-cornered jungle of color, a spreading bush of Queen Victoria, an offshoot of the parent stem, showered the ground with its glowing petals.

Above the farther wall leaned a



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magnolia, a portly, eminently respectable magnolia, spreading its long branches far out over the garden as though offering old-gentlemanly protection to the rose-ladies. In the long afternoons the green and bronze foliage, now reflecting the morning sunlight from its varnished surface, made a pleasant gloom thereabouts, throwing great gently-moving ovals of greenish shadow over the rosebushes along the old wall; here was the Giant of Battles, with petals so darkly red as to verge upon black, and the Duchess, with old-fashioned blooms, globular, chary of petals, showing yellow at the heart when fully opened to the sun, and of a rare old shade of

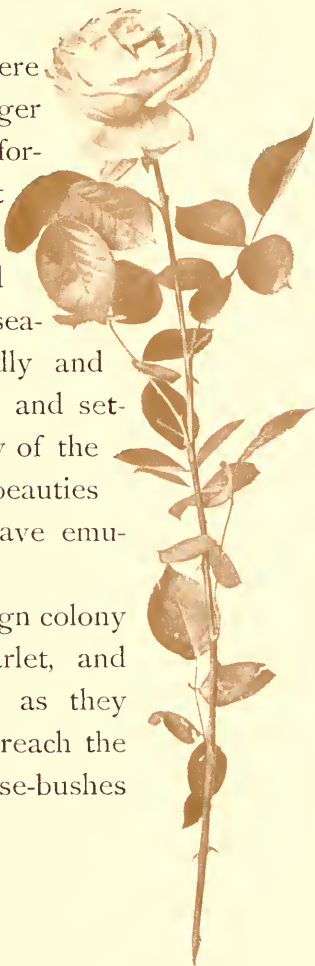


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pink that made one think of lavender-scented brocades and was like the inner surface of a sea-shell.

Many a rose bloomed there, whose name was no longer known, whose origin was forgotten with its grower, but which, nameless and unpretentious, leafed and budded and flowered season after season, year after year, gladly and humbly fulfilling its mission and setting an example which many of the far-heralded and perverse beauties of the garden might well have emulated.

In one corner dwelt a foreign colony of hardy phlox, white, scarlet, and crimson, tall and vigorous as they needs must be in order to reach the sunlight above the great rose-bushes



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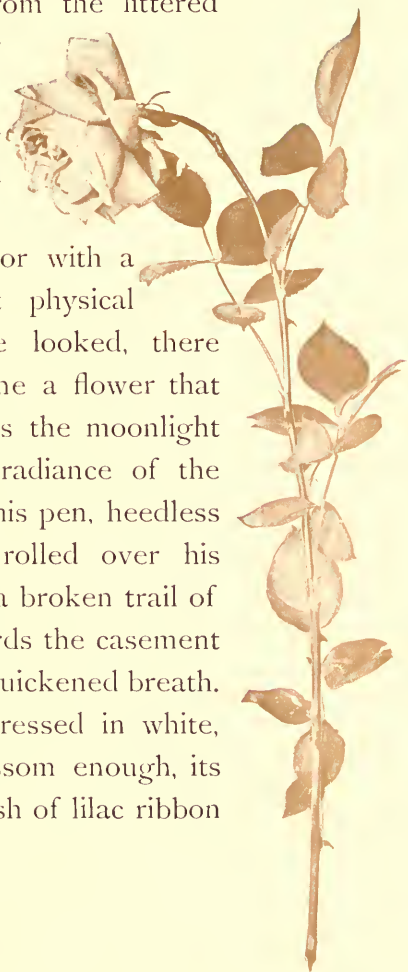
and to maintain their hard-won footing. And here and there, aliens too, yuccas shot their great spikes above the wilderness of bloom and swung their panicles of cream-colored bells, whose tinkling the birds and bees alone might hear, in the languorous morning breeze. Fallen petals splashed the level tops of the box hedges with brilliant colors, and, when a vagrant wind set the blooms a-nodding, fluttered to the gravel paths and so drifted like scented, tinted snowflakes to and fro. In the shadowed corners of the hedge closely woven spider webs were jewelled with dew-drops and, when the moving leaves let the sun-flecks through, gleamed and sparkled like silver filaments hung with diamonds and blue pearls.



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For the fiftieth time since breakfast Burton looked up from the littered table and gazed over the scene, inhaling the intense yet delicate perfume and bathing his sight in the little sea of color with a sensation of almost physical delight. And as he looked, there stepped into the scene a flower that dimmed the others as the moonlight dims the first faint radiance of the stars. He dropped his pen, heedless of the fact that it rolled over his clean sheets leaving a broken trail of ink, and leaned towards the casement with eager eyes and quickened breath.

The flower was dressed in white, in hue a modest blossom enough, its only color being a sash of lilac ribbon



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about its waist. On its head—for, after all, what does it matter if metaphors are mixed?—was a broad-brimmed garden hat wound about the crown with a filmy white veil. It—she—carried a basket in one hand and with the other held up daintily the skirt of her gown. For a moment she stood on the topmost step in the green shadow of a yellow Banksia, small, graceful, a very rose herself, and the fairest, daintiest in all the garden. Burton's papers rustled in the tiny morning breeze and fluttered unseen one by one to the dark-hued, highly polished floor. He leaned an elbow on the sill and, without shame, kept his eyes upon the denizen of the rose-garden. After a moment of smiling survey of the scene the girl descended the steps and, basket at



THE BASKET WEIGHTED WITH PINK AND WHITE BLOSSOMS

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side, threaded the paths, snipping here and there with a pair of tiny scissors held in a gloved hand until the basket was filled and weighted with pink and white blossoms.

Yet all the time the broad brim of her hat threw a soft shadow across her face, and it was not until she paused beside the iron fence to clip a single cluster of crimson Damasks that the watcher in the window was rewarded with a clear view of her features. Perhaps, for a Northerner, Burton was impressionable. At all events, it is a fact that when she lifted her face for a moment in an idle glance towards the neighboring house and the light fell fully, boldly upon it, his heart leaped chokingly and then, with a series of disconcerting bumps and thuds, raced faster than it had

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within his memory. And yet the glimpse he had was but a fleeting one, for the girl's eyes encountered

his own, and after a look of infinitesimal duration, a look pregnant with surprise and dismay, were swiftly lowered, while a faint blush crept over the warm, clear skin. The next instant the shadow had descended again ; another, and she had turned away, blossom-laden, towards the house.

Burton gazed after her, his mind a confused memory of warm, brown hair and clear, startled brown eyes ; of a tender, oval face, southern-hued,

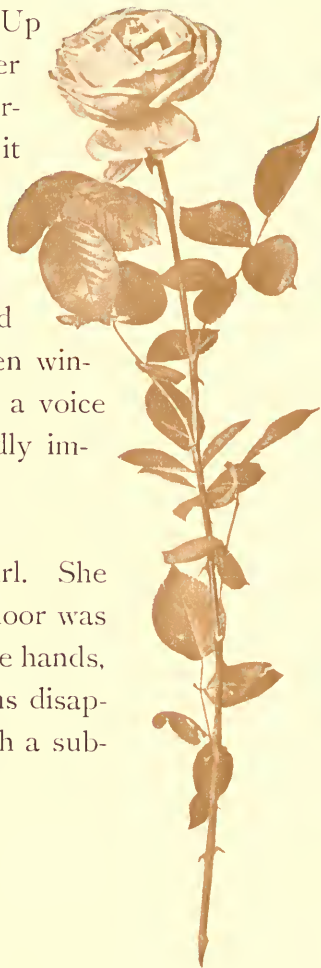


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sun-lighted ; of small, red lips, upon which a little glad smile was fading before a look of confusion. Up the path she went, with never a look behind, yet not hurriedly ; plainly, she wanted it understood that here was no rout, but merely a retirement in good order before a superior and better-positioned force. Suddenly from an open window of the house above her a voice called, a man's voice, languidly imperative,—

“Kitty! Kitty!”

“I'm coming,” called the girl. She flew lightly up the steps, the door was opened from within by invisible hands, and the girl and the blossoms disappeared. The door closed with a subdued slam.



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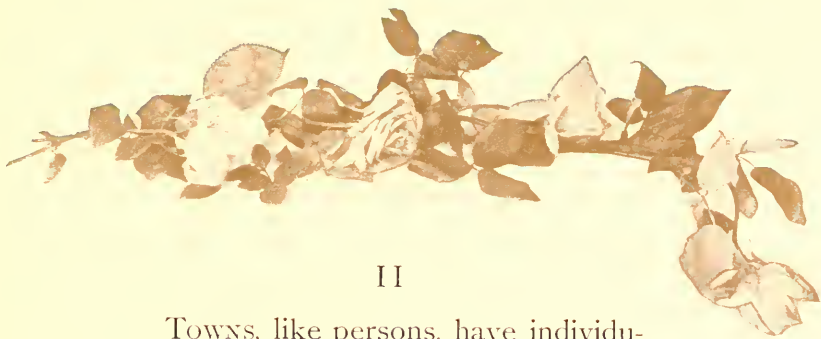
Burton drew a long sigh and mechanically picked up his dead cigarette.

“Kitty,” he murmured under his breath ; and again, “Kitty !”

Then, with the cigarette burning, he blew a cloud of purple smoke out of the window into the June sunshine and nodded his head confidentially towards the garden and the house.

“Kitty of the Roses,” he whispered.





II

Towns, like persons, have individuality, some distinct, others indistinct. By the individuality of some we are attracted, by that of others we are repelled. There are some that are sour, selfish, intent only upon themselves, that give us a scowl of suspicion for greeting and turn their shoulder as one who would say "I don't know you and I don't want to. I am very busy; keep out of my way." Then there are towns that shout us a laughing "Hello," that shake our hand and pat our back, merry, care-free, pleasure-pursuing

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towns these that make us welcome so long as we laugh and sing with them, but have no love for us when we frown or weep.

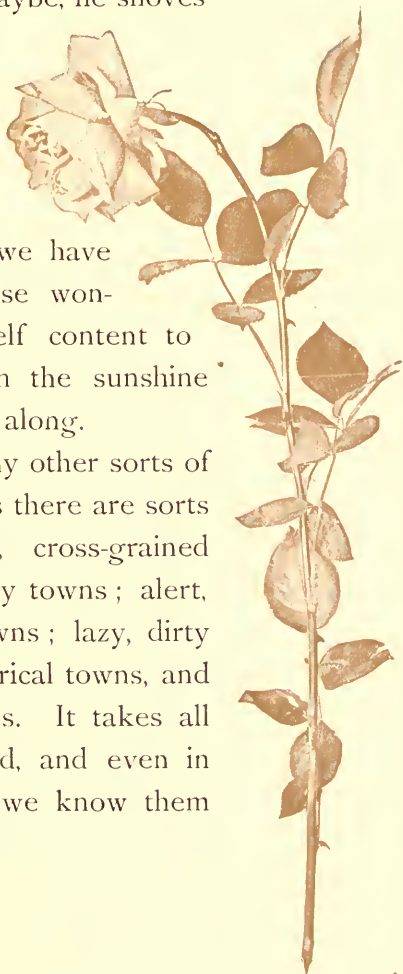
There are frankly mercenary towns whose greetings are shrewd and sober and whose eyes seek our pocket-book even as the door closes behind us. In such towns our welcome is likely to be just as long as our bank account, but, at least, we will find no hypocrisy. And then there are towns that are like—well, like a genial, kindly-faced fellow who sits on a bench in the sunlight whittling a stick, gives us a neighborly nod and moves along that we may sit beside him. He doesn't take our hand, he doesn't look askance at our frayed cuffs and battered valise, but, after awhile, if he



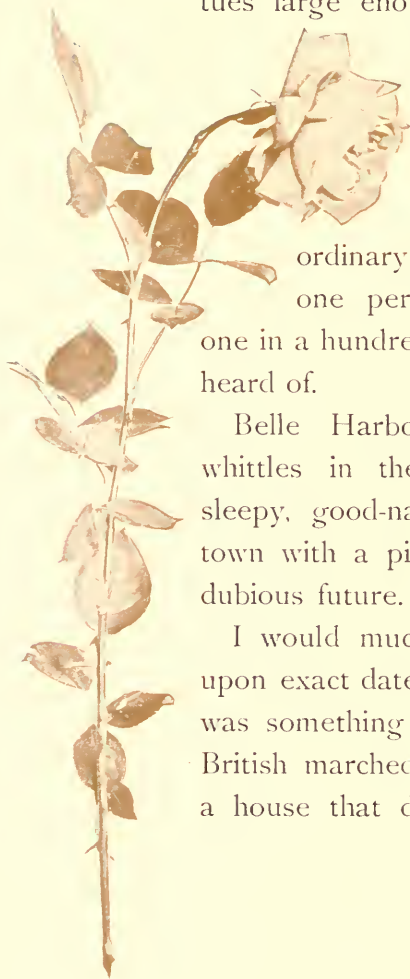
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likes us he offers us a stick that we, too, may whittle, or, maybe, he shoves his tobacco along to us. Perhaps as we sit there in the sunlight and watch him we wonder why he doesn't work; after we have stayed awhile we cease wondering and find ourself content to whittle and smoke in the sunshine and let the world wag along.

And there are many other sorts of towns, just as many as there are sorts of personality; hard, cross-grained towns; fretful, grumpy towns; alert, busy, inhospitable towns; lazy, dirty towns; nervous, hysterical towns, and mean, rapacious towns. It takes all sorts to make a world, and even in the worst of them, if we know them



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intimately enough, we may find virtues large enough to atone for the faults. And all this sermonizing merely as an introduction to a little country town that is barely on the ordinary map and that not one person in fifty—no, not one in a hundred, perhaps—has ever heard of.

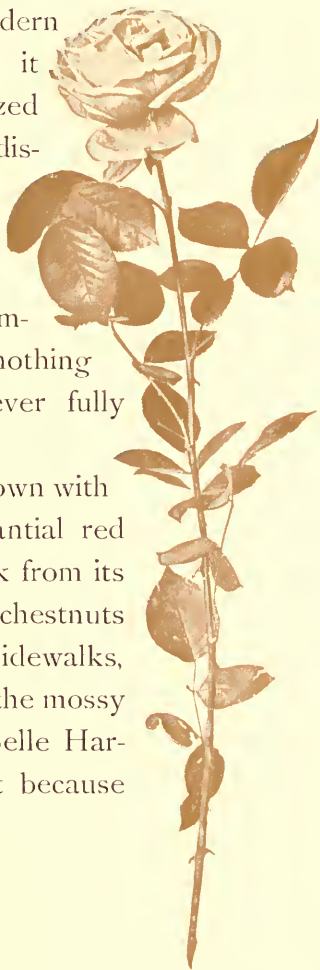
Belle Harbour is a town that whittles in the sunshine. It is a sleepy, good-natured, courteous old town with a picturesque past and a dubious future.

I would much rather not venture upon exact dates, but Belle Harbour was something of a place when the British marched on Washington, and a house that does not lay claim to

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having served as a Hessian barracks, a British hospital, or a general's residence, is so indecently modern that good citizens view it askance. Belle Harbour dozed quietly until the Civil War disturbed it. Even then it bore excitement with a sort of calm dignity. When the war was over it relapsed into slumber once more and now nothing save the last trump will ever fully awaken it.

But it's a fine old town, a town with a dignified past, with substantial red brick mansions set just back from its broad streets, with oaks and chestnuts shading the crumbling brick sidewalks, and magnolias leaning over the mossy walls and rusted fences. Belle Harbour's streets are wide, not because



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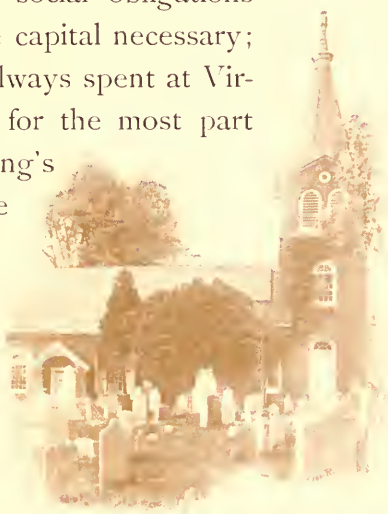
traffic demands width, but because when the town was laid out there was a great deal of room and it seemed a pity not to make use of as much of it as was possible. So on Belle Harbour's main streets ten vehicles could very easily pass side by side. Not that they ever have or ever will ; the sound of one mud-splashed buggy rattling over the paving stones is an event that causes great interest, while the simultaneous appearance of two vehicles produces a condition of mild panic up and down the streets. Next to the low curbstones the worn, irregular paving stones show signs of travel ; but for the rest, the streets are wild wastes of weeds and grass, wherein here and there a splash of color tells where an adventurous



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garden flower, aided by bird or breeze, is striving to colonize the wilderness.

Life flows very evenly, very quietly, and, I think, very happily in Belle Harbour. Children are born, grow up, marry, and die without moving out of sight of old Christ Church, save, perhaps, for a brief but adventurous journey to Washington, Richmond or the coast. Business sometimes takes the Belle Harbour citizen to Washington; sometimes social obligations render a trip to the capital necessary; honeymoons are always spent at Virginia Beach. But for the most part the resident of King's Street lives his life between the post-office and the Seminary, respectively the North-



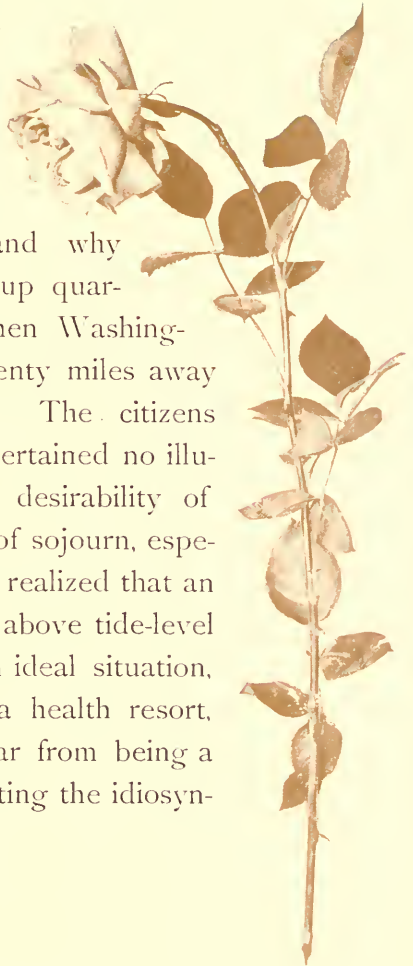
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ern and Southern limits of his world. When he penetrates beyond the Seminary it is to drive into the country, perhaps to some decaying plantation. When he goes North of the post-office it is to enter the shabby, care-free negro quarter. He clings very closely to the old traditions, the old customs, the old thoughts. There are no telephones in Belle Harbour, and I doubt if you could find a phonograph in any of the dim, white-walled drawing-rooms. Belle Harbour still shudders when it recalls how, a few years ago, it was threatened with the advent of an electric car line. On that occasion the old town, if it did not absolutely awake, at least turned and muttered in its sleep, disturbed by monstrous visions.



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The residents of King's Street, observing him from behind latticed windows or meeting him on the oak-shaded sidewalk of that grass-grown thoroughfare, wondered who Burton was and why he elected to take up quarters in the town when Washington was less than twenty miles away across the Potomac. The citizens of Belle Harbour entertained no illusions regarding the desirability of their town as a place of sojourn, especially after May; they realized that an elevation of five feet above tide-level does not constitute an ideal situation, and that, judged as a health resort, Belle Harbour was far from being a success. Even admitting the idiosyn-



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crasies of the Northerner, Burton's presence was inexplicable. Belle Harbour knew something about the Northern traveller, for the town was a Mecca towards which



Washington visitors frequently turned their steps. But they seldom tarried; having viewed the old church in which Revolutionary heroes had worshipped, and paid their dimes and quarters for sections of crumbling bricks supposed to have

been detached from the edifice walls, but in reality pried out of neighboring sidewalks by enterprising boys, they literally as well as metaphorically shook the dust of the old town from their feet and hurried to the steam-

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boat. Even the commercial traveller took pains to insure the completion of his business before the last boat returned to Washington. The only hostelry in the town confined its ministrations entirely to the citizens, and they seldom penetrated farther than the little, low-raftered bar-room. And so Belle Harbour viewed Burton with extreme but courteous interest.

The information afforded by Mrs. Phillips, of whom the visitor had rented two second-floor rooms for an indefinite period, was limited and unsatisfactory. He was a New York man, she confided, and an architect; he had his meals sent to his rooms and ate three eggs every morning; he found Belle Harbour very pictu-

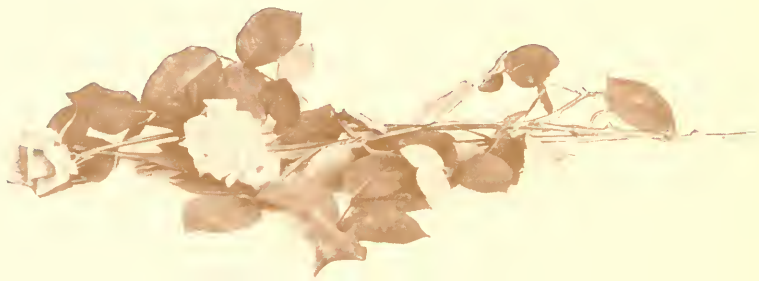


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resque and interesting, and wore pink and blue pajamas ; he made strange drawings in books and did much writing ; he smoked cigarettes or pipes all day long and dropped the ashes on the floor. King's Street heard these facts with avidity and reiterated "*Why?*" And Mrs. Phillips only shook her head and murmured in tones of finality,—

“Well, you must remember he's a No'therner !”

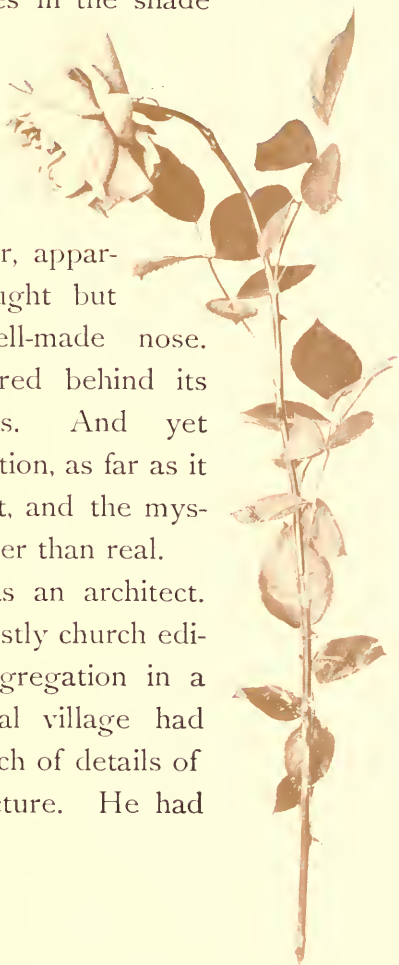
Burton's conduct on the afternoon of the day which had given him his first glimpse of the girl in the rose-garden did nothing to dispel the growing conviction that there was something strange and mysterious about his presence in Belle Harbour. Armed with a sketch-book, he wandered aim-



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lessly the length of King's Street, smoked four cigarettes in the shade of the church-yard chestnuts, and subsequently wandered aimlessly home again without once having set pencil to paper or, apparently, having seen aught but the end of his well-made nose. King's Street whispered behind its sun-repelling jalousies. And yet Mrs. Phillips's information, as far as it went, was quite correct, and the mystery was apparent rather than real.

Stephen Burton was an architect. A commission for a costly church edifice for a wealthy congregation in a New Jersey residential village had sent him South in search of details of pure Colonial architecture. He had



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found more to interest him in Belle Harbour than he had anticipated or than its citizens knew of. The old church was a veritable mine of valuable material, and certain old

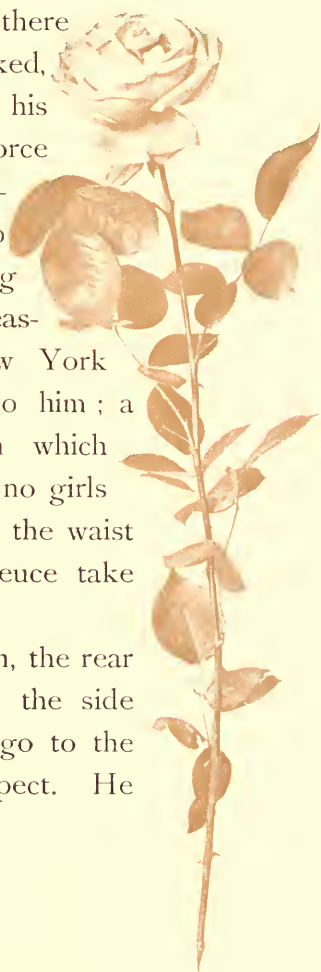


doorways and gables and porches scattered through the town and over the adjacent country were far too interesting to allow of neglect. Being a man of comfortable means, Burton's profession was a passion rather than a trade; he could and did afford to accept only those commissions that appealed to him, but having once taken them he put his very best into each, with the result that he was already known, at thirty-eight years of age, as the foremost man in the

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line of his selection—church and public edifices. He had already spent a week in Belle Harbour; there was no hurry; if he liked, there was another week at his disposal. With an office force that could be entirely depended upon there was no good reason for returning North until it suited his pleasure. This afternoon New York seemed utterly repellent to him; a hot, noisy, dusty city in which were no rose-gardens and no girls in white gowns gathered at the waist with lavender ribbons. Deuce take New York!

When he gained his room, the rear apartment that overlooked the side yard, his first action was to go to the window and survey the prospect. He



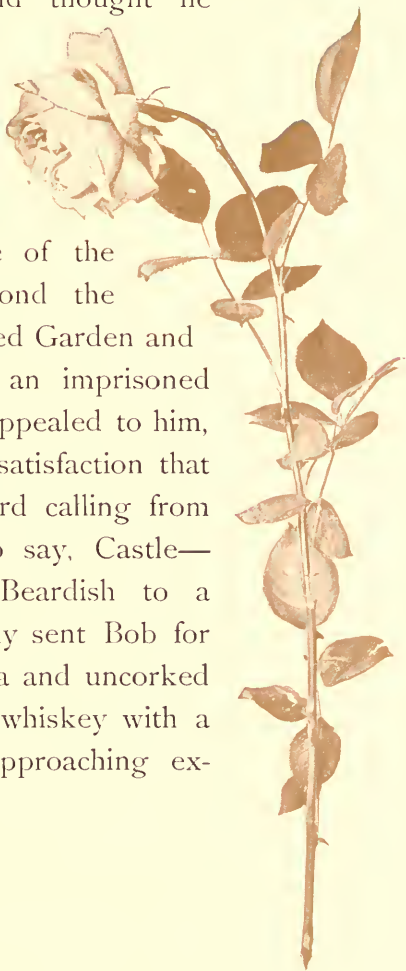
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found it disappointing. The roses were there, to be sure, and the hammock; but roses and hammocks do not always in themselves satisfy. He lighted a pipe and wondered a trifle impatiently why the denizens of the house beyond the box-hedged garden kept indoors when there was a cool and shady porch and a comfortable hammock awaiting them. He felt somewhat aggrieved over it. When Bob—the general factotum of the establishment—brought up his supper and set the frayed white cloth over the table Burton contemplated making inquiries as to the occupants of the house at whose blank windows he had been



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gazing for the better part of an hour. But on second thought he refrained; there was something alluring in the thought of nursing his ignorance; he could give his fancy full swing and make of the rose-filled space beyond the iron fence an Enchanted Garden and of the girl in white an imprisoned Princess. The idea appealed to him, and he recalled with satisfaction that the voice he had heard calling from the house—that is to say, Castle—had sounded Blue Beardish to a degree. So he merely sent Bob for a fresh syphon of soda and uncorked the bottle of Scotch whiskey with a thrill of something approaching excitement.



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Burton frequently wondered, when he gazed about his apartments, why he had thought it necessary to rent two rooms from Mrs. Phillips. So far as space went one would have been quite enough. The front room overlooked King's Street, or would have done so had the trees which grew close to the windows allowed, and was broad and long and high, with white walls and ceiling against which three old yellow-stained steel engravings looked lamentably inadequate. Even the big four-poster bed seemed lost in the immensity of the apartment. The rear room was more cheerful. It was no smaller and there were the same glaringly white walls, but the furnishings were more numerous and the adornments more ambitious. Here



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he was the proud possessor of six pictures, a framed sampler, three advertising calendars, and two lithographed mottoes. He never tired of studying the sampler; its artistic effects fascinated him even though the information conveyed was but slight:

A b c d e f g

H i j k l m n

O p q r s t u

V w x y z &

ELIZABETH R. WARREN

HER WORK

1827

1838

It was the border of purple, green, and yellow roses that awakened his enthusiasm, and the queer little something—which might have been an hour-



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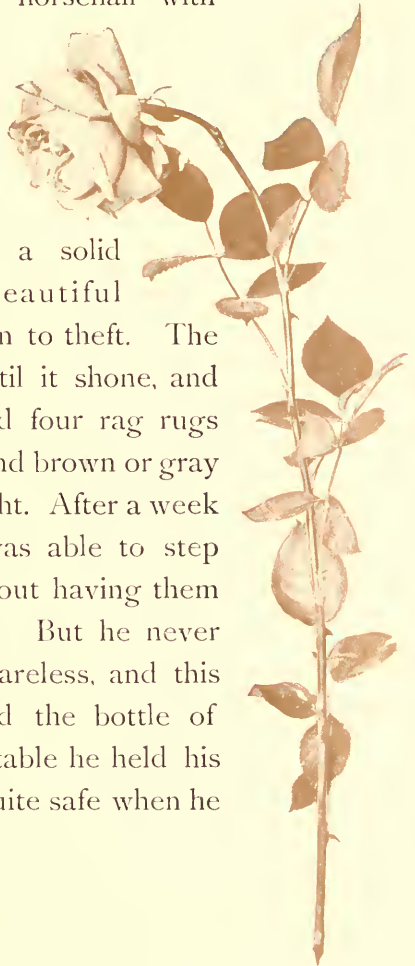
glass and might have been a dress-maker's form—which divided the dates at the bottom. As for the mottoes he found less in them to care for. "Give Us this Day our Daily Bread" was hackneyed and incomplete, while "Dare to do Right" had so many violent comparisons of color that none would have thought of paying heed to its advice. The pictures were uninteresting, a few depressing, a few inexcusable, even when their period was taken into consideration. Aside from the sampler, the most artistic of the wall-decorations, Burton decided, were the three calendars.

The furniture was all of it good, if somewhat out of repair. The big lounge was of mahogany veneer with a high, straight back of such delight-



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fully simple lines as to atone for the slippery, inhospitable horsehair with which it was upholstered. There were some good chairs, a folding card-table, a swell-front, claw-footed lowboy, and a solid mahogany desk, beautiful enough to drive a man to theft. The floor was polished until it shone, and over it were scattered four rag rugs whose tones of gray and brown or gray and blue were a delight. After a week of practice Burton was able to step upon these rugs without having them slide from under him. But he never became proud and careless, and this evening as he carried the bottle of Scotch across to the table he held his breath and only felt quite safe when he



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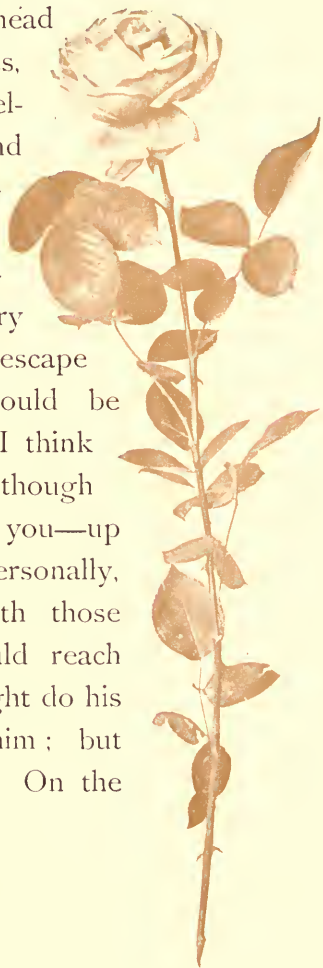
had lowered himself carefully into his fiddle-back, rush-bottomed chair.

The table was placed by the window commanding the Castle, and during supper he studied speculatively the pregnability of the place. What he saw delighted him. The rose-vines made it possible to attain the second-story balcony with a minimum of exertion. With the Princess once in his arms—— He paused suddenly just there and closed his eyes, striving with a pleasant warmth under the pocket of his negligee shirt to imagine the situation thoroughly. With the Princess in his arms! With

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those wide brown eyes just under his own and the pearl-like cheek within reach—— He shook his head and opened his own eyes, which, by the way, were steel-colored and not brown, and looked across the two gardens to the Castle.

“If I had you there, Princess,” he murmured, “I very much fear we would never escape from the Ogre. We should be caught like rats in a trap—I think that’s the correct term, though hardly complimentary to you—up there on the balcony. Personally, I wouldn’t much care; with those lips of yours where I could reach them, my dear, the Ogre might do his worst and be hanged to him; but then there’s you to think of. On the



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whole, perhaps it would be best if I had you rescued by proxy. There's Bob, for instance!"

He smiled broadly at the thought and refilled his glass.

"Once down from the balcony, the rest would be simple. A wild flight through the rose-garden, a perilous surmounting of the iron fence, a swift rush down the side yard here, and then a trusty steed in waiting,—you see, my dear, an automobile would be out of the question on these funny roads of yours,—and the wide world before us!"

He lighted a cigarette and leaned out over the casement. The evening shadows were blurring the rose-blooms, and high overhead a half moon was sailing out of a bank of



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fleecy clouds. The Castle showed a solitary light in the window beyond the balcony. He blew a puff of smoke towards it.

“Kitty—Kitty of the Roses,” he murmured, “do you want to be rescued, dear?”

From the house came the sound of a girl's voice in song, sweet, caressing; he could not distinguish the words, and in a moment the voice was stilled.

He waited and listened, but the silence held. With a little laugh at himself, Burton arose and lighted his lamp.

“I'm afraid you don't, my dear,” he said. “You're too happy. Don't



KITTY OF THE ROSES

you know that real Princesses are never happy?"

He lowered the shade with a last look into the darkened garden and resolutely took up his papers.





III

“PUT it under the tree in the corner,” Burton directed, “and then bring me a chair.”

“Mos’ pow’ful warm out hyar, sah,” remonstrated the negro.

“Warm? Nonsense, Robert! Feel that breeze fresh from the river. Isn’t that cool enough?”

“Ah ain’ feelin’ no breeze; an’ anyways it doan come from no river, sah; river’s over that a-ways.”

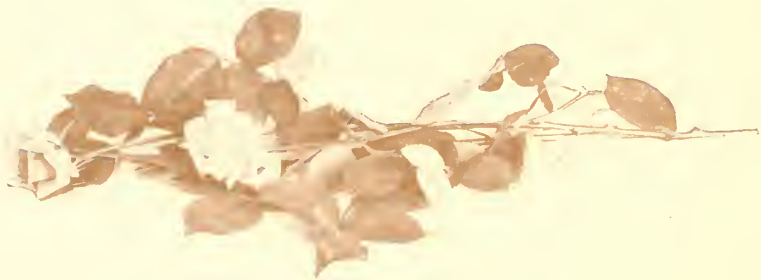
“Robert, I fear you’re deficient in imagination,” answered Burton, shaking his head. “I insist that there is a breeze and that it is coming from the

KITTY OF THE ROSES

river. Geography musn't interfere with imagination ; if it does, why, so much the worse for geography, Robert."

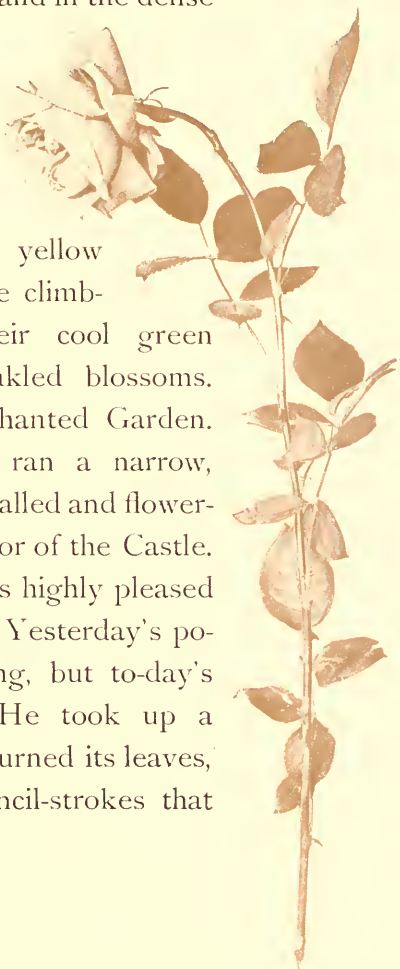
"Yessah." Having set table and chair in place, Robert retired, only pausing at the side door long enough to throw a last dubious glance behind him. "He's plum' crazy," he muttered with a shake of the head.

Burton spread his papers over the table, looked to pens and pencils, lighted a cigarette, thrust his hands in his pockets, and, tilting backward in the kitchen chair, surveyed the scene contentedly. Above him the contorted branches of the Daphne-tree spread out and upward, making a leafy canopy through which the morning sunlight dripped in great,



KITTY OF THE ROSES

golden globules. Birds were singing happily in the garden and in the dense oaks that lined the wide street beyond. To his right was the old brick wall; before him ran the iron fence through which yellow and crimson and white climbing roses thrust their cool green leaves and dew-sprinkled blossoms. Beyond was the Enchanted Garden. Straight before him ran a narrow, red-gravel walk, box-walled and flower-draped, to the back door of the Castle. Burton smiled; he was highly pleased with his generalship. Yesterday's position was commanding, but to-day's was impregnable! He took up a sketch-book and idly turned its leaves, scanning the bold pencil-strokes that



KITTY OF THE ROSES

reproduced pillar and pediment, cornice and gable, with appreciative eyes. Yet he was not so much absorbed but that he heard the sound of an opening door. Keeping his head bent over his book, he looked towards the Castle.

On the steps stood the girl. She wore the same white muslin gown with the lavender ribbon and carried the same basket. And, as yesterday, she stood, lithe and graceful, on the top step and surveyed the riot of color before her. Yet, ere she stepped down to the gravel, she raised her eyes in a fleeting glance towards a certain window in the other house. Burton chuckled.

"Ah, Kitty," he murmured, "you're only human, after all!"



KITTY OF THE ROSES

She took the farther path, a choice he applauded silently, since she would not discover him until she turned at the bottom of the garden, when flight with dignity would be out of the question. Now and then he caught fleeting glimpses of her hat above the bushes as she moved along, and heard the clipping of the scissors. As she neared the corner he dipped pen in ink and wrote industriously :



“ BELLE HARBOUR, VIRGINIA, June 3.

“She’s coming ; she’s almost in sight. I don’t quite know what I am writing. The situation grows intense. Will she retreat or

KITTY OF THE ROSES

advance? I can see the white of her gown through the leaves. She is almost at the corner of the path. My courage is ebbing fast ; if she delays much longer, I shall beat a disordered retreat myself. Now ! She's coming, coming, coming—she's here. . . . ”

The girl came around the corner.

She was humming softly to herself and swinging her basket. Burton's head was bent over the table. She stopped and added a cluster of damask roses to her store. When she raised her head her eyes sought the window that had harbored the foe the previous day ; it was empty. Undoubtedly she was vastly relieved, even if her countenance didn't express it. Alas ! little did she think that the enemy was entrenched almost beside her. Unsuspectingly,

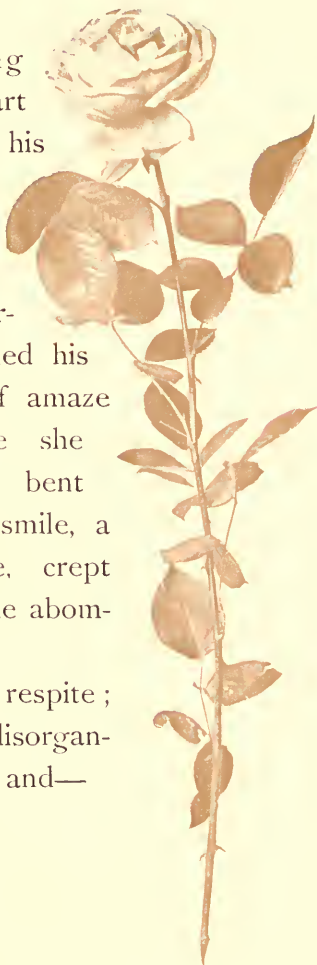


KITTY OF THE ROSES

carelessly, still humming her little air, she drew nearer and nearer to his position.

Suddenly the humming ceased abruptly. Burton's heart gave a leap and he brought his artillery into action. He raised his eyes calmly—they belied the tumult in his breast—and gazed with polite surprise into hers. She returned his look with one expressive of amaze and—yes—appreciation; ere she turned her head away and bent over a bush the ghost of a smile, a roguish and demure smile, crept around her mouth. Then the abominable hat hid her.

Burton was grateful for the respite; his forces were becoming disorganized. He took a long breath and—



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“ . . . She scorns retreat ! Despite the superiority of my position I cannot congratulate myself upon having had the advantage in the first skirmish. At present we are both out of action. Had I the courage I would ask for a parley, but alas ! I am already wavering along my entire line ; I can only put up a brave front and rely upon awing her. She is delicious, simply delicious. Her eyes . . . ”

Ah ! what heroism ! What impudent daring ! What magnificent bravery ! The girl came to the fence just in front of the table—not six yards distant!—and calmly snipped two bunches of pink roses with the coolest, most composed, and most unconscious air in the world ! She even hummed a little ! Burton stared most impolitely and strove to think of something to say. “ Good-morning ” sounded so idiotic, so puerile ! “ How do you do ? ”



CALMLY SNIPPED TWO BUNCHES OF PINK ROSES

KITTY OF THE ROSES

was out of the question ! To ask for a rose would have been absolutely impertinent ! The psychological moment passed ; the girl turned away ! Burton sighed regretfully and blamed his faint-heartedness. Up the centre path she went, stooping here and there, humming more assuredly now—a sweet, dainty, charming figure. He leaned his chin in his palm and gazed his fill. The basket was so laden that the blossoms spilled upon the path, but still she gathered more. Burton smiled appreciatingly.

“ Yes, yes, I understand, my dear,” he muttered beneath his breath. “ In the best of order ; horse, foot, and artillery intact ; such a retirement is a victory ! ”

At the foot of the steps she paused and deliberately gazed about her over

KITTY OF THE ROSES

the wealth of leaf and bud and blossom. But she did not bestow a glance upon the discomfited enemy. Then, gathering her skirts daintily about her, she tripped up the steps and entered the house. With the closing of the door Burton sighed again. He lighted a fresh cigarette and with a whimsical smile read what he had written. Then he again dipped pen in ink and wrote :

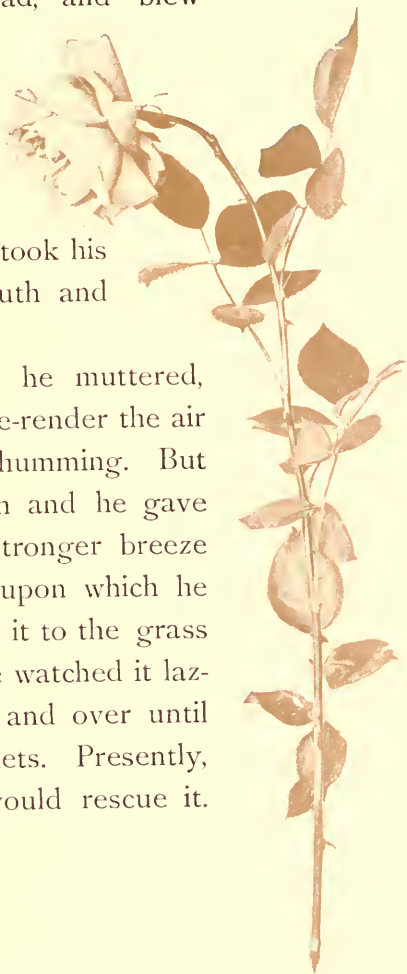
“ . . . It is all over ! I have met the enemy and I am hers ! I have retained my position, but at what a cost ! I have lost my heart and my self-possession ; my self-esteem is sorely wounded. And, alas, I glory in defeat ! My only regret is that in her clemency she has refrained from taking me prisoner. Ah, Kitty of the Roses, come back and make your victory complete ! ”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

He tossed aside the pen, placed his hands behind his head, and blew smoke-rings up into the branches. A little wind crept in gustily from the street and fluttered the papers on the table. Burton took his cigarette from his mouth and pursed his lips.

“How did it go?” he muttered, striving to recall and re-render the air that the girl had been humming. But his memory failed him and he gave up the attempt. A stronger breeze caught up the paper upon which he had written and blew it to the grass beside the fence. He watched it lazily as it turned over and over until caught by the iron pickets. Presently, he told himself, he would rescue it.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

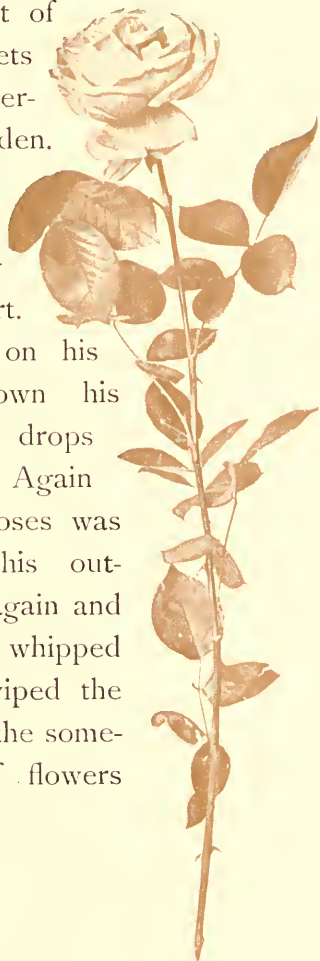
Then his gaze, travelling beyond, caught sight of a cluster of scarlet roses lying upon the path just inside the fence. He glanced rapidly, stealthily, towards the Castle. There was no one in sight. His roaming eyes fell upon his cane. The next moment he had seized it and was thrusting it between the pickets of the fence, squatting most ungracefully with the mid-morning sun beating remorselessly down upon his back.

The cane was long enough for his purpose and its crooked handle seemed fashioned for just such an emergency. But the low branches of a rose-bush were between him and the prize, and every time he tried to drag the latter towards the fence they interposed and foiled him. The leaves



KITTY OF THE ROSES

of the Daphne-tree rustled in the gathering breeze and murmured "Thief! Thief!" At his side a sheet of paper escaped from the pickets and, all unseen, bounded merrily into the Enchanted Garden. Burton's face grew redder and redder and the sun seemed resolved on burning his back through the light shirt. The perspiration gathered on his forehead and slipped down his straight, long nose in little drops that tickled excruciatingly. Again and again the cluster of roses was almost within reach of his outstretched brown hand, and again and again the faithful branches whipped it back. Burton paused, wiped the drops from his face, viewed the somewhat bedraggled bunch of flowers



KITTY OF THE ROSES

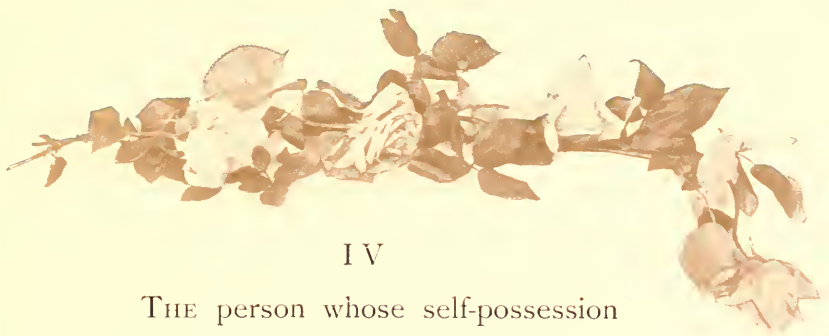
exasperatedly, and summed up the situation mildly and satisfactorily in a clearly enunciated and temper-relieving "Damn!"

Then he poked the cane again through the pickets and past the branches. And then,—

"Perhaps I can help you?" said a voice almost overhead.

He looked up into the amused brown eyes of the girl.





IV

THE person whose self-possession fails him miserably at ordinary junctures may rise superior at a soul-disturbing crisis. Burton, red-faced, perspiring, conscious of the sorry figure he presented, arose from his hands and knees with brilliant composure. A glistening drop was tickling the side of his nose, yet he inclined his head politely towards the pickets; innumerable other drops were creeping disturbingly down the middle of his back, yet he smiled almost blandly.

“Thank you, if you will be so kind,” he said, and held forth his hand.

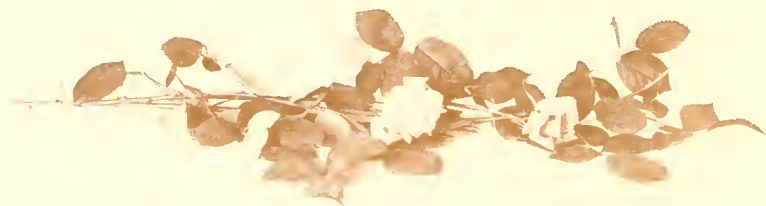
KITTY OF THE ROSES

She bent gracefully and picked up the spray. Then,—

“I fear they are rather wilted,” she said with polite regret. “There are fresher ones on your side of the fence, are there not?”

Her accent was delicious, Burton thought; soft, creamy,—like her cheeks,—filled with odd little drawls and slurs. He hoped she would go on. But she didn't; she only paused and looked questioningly from the withered spray of roses to his face. Her expression was merely one of courteous indifference, of polite interest tinged with reserve; yet in the farther depths of her brown eyes a little imp of mischief danced into sight and out again.

“The roses on my side are charm-



KITTY OF THE ROSES

ingly fresh," responded Burton, "but the fact is I have a desire for that especial spray."

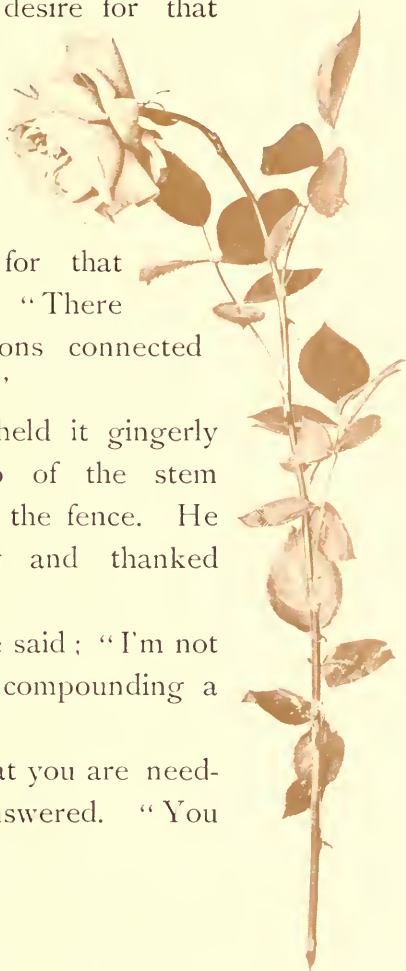
"Perhaps because stolen fruit is sweetest?" she asked maliciously.

"Not altogether for that reason," he smiled. "There are certain associations connected with it that endear it."

"Indeed?" She held it gingerly by the extreme tip of the stem and reached towards the fence. He accepted it gravely and thanked her.

"Please don't," she said; "I'm not sure that I am not compounding a felony."

"I'm convinced that you are needlessly alarmed," he answered. "You



KITTY OF THE ROSES

have only presented me with what was yours to give."

But she shook her head. "Oh, no, not at all! I discovered you stealing"—this with awful emphasis—"my roses, and I came to your aid merely because I feared that if I did not you would have a sunstroke."

"Stealing is an unpleasant word," he said tentatively. "Couldn't you substitute borrowing?"

"Borrowing?" The brown eyes opened very wide. "But I don't believe it would be true."

"I give you my word," he answered earnestly, "that I will return these to you as soon as I am done with them."

She leaned forward and plucked a withered leaf from a bush to hide the smile that trembled about her lips.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Have you—have you any idea when that will be?” she asked.

“Indeed, yes, I can tell you to a minute!”

“Can you?”

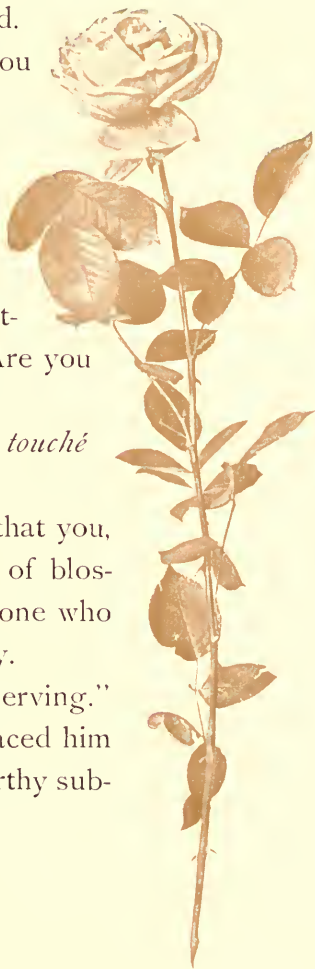
“You shall have them back the very instant you give me some fresh ones.”

“Oh!” She was still hunting for withered leaves. “Are you going to press them, then?”

Burton acknowledged the *touché* with a smile.

“I had entertained hopes that you, with such a fabulous wealth of blossoms, would be charitable to one who has none,” he replied gravely.

“Charity is only for the deserving.” She gave up her search and faced him again. “*Thieves* are not worthy subjects.”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

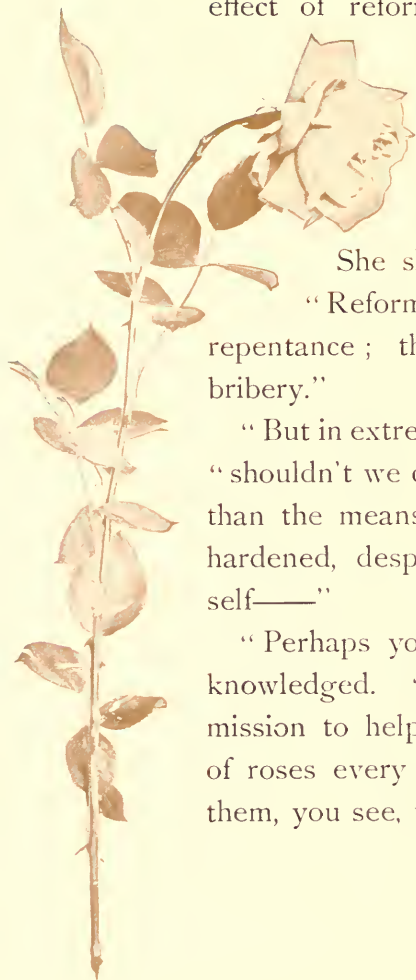
“ But a little charity might have the effect of reforming them. For example, if you were to present me each morning with a rose, there would remain no necessity for stealing.”

She shook her head again.

“ Reform should come through repentance ; that would be merely bribery.”

“ But in extreme cases,” he pleaded, “ shouldn't we consider the end rather than the means? Now, with such a hardened, desperate criminal as myself——”

“ Perhaps you are right,” she acknowledged. “ And so you have permission to help yourself to a cluster of roses every day. You can reach them, you see, without trouble.”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Oh!” he said disappointedly.
“But I shouldn’t want to do that;
I fear I would damage the
bushes.”

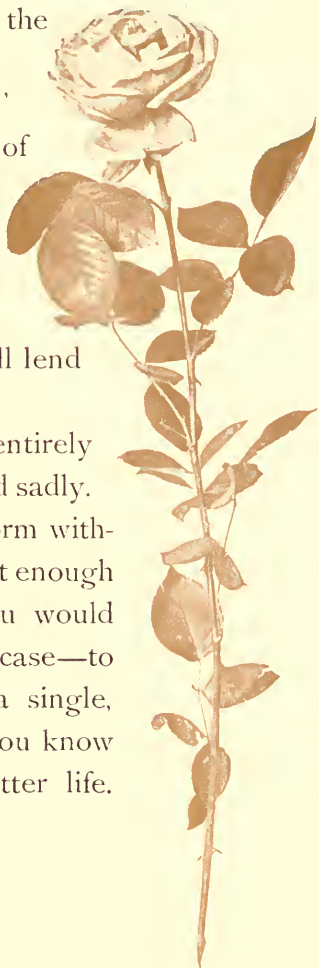
“Not if you used scissors.”

He made a pretence of
searching his pockets.

“I’m afraid I haven’t such
a thing,” he said despond-
ently.

“I’m sure Mrs. Phillips will lend
you a pair.”

“You are taking an entirely
wrong course with me,” he said sadly.
“I feel that I shall never reform with-
out some assistance; I haven’t enough
moral courage. Now, if you would
take a little interest in my case—to
the extent of one rose, just a single,
solitary rose now and then, you know
—I’m sure I could lead a better life.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

Don't you think that — er — you could?"

A sheet of paper danced out to the path at her feet and she stooped and picked it up, crumpling it in her hand.

"I'm afraid not," she said.

She dropped the crumpled paper into her basket and moved off up the path. Then she paused and turned.

"Good-morning." She gave a polite little inclination of her head and Burton removed his hat.

"Good-morning," he answered dejectedly.

She went on towards the house, humming softly. He watched until the door had closed behind her; then he threw himself in his chair again and looked smilingly at the faded,



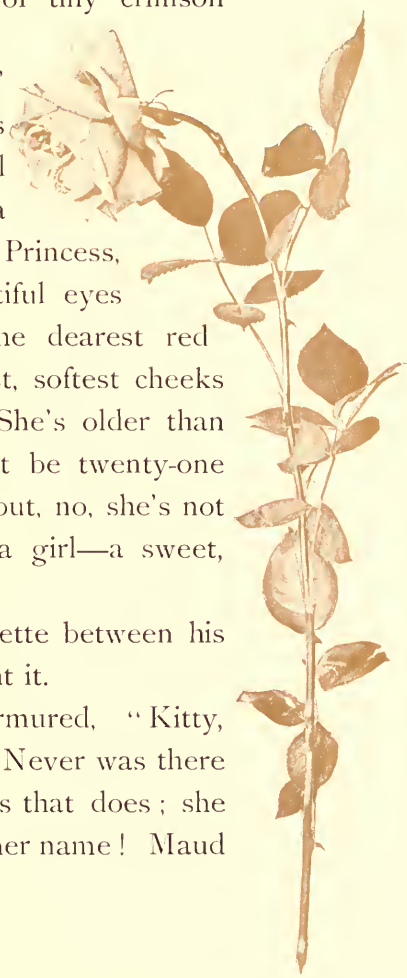
KITTY OF THE ROSES

bedraggled cluster of tiny crimson roses in his hand.

“She’s wonderful,” he said under his breath. “She’s a real Princess, after all, a little five-foot-two Princess, with the most beautiful eyes in the world and the dearest red lips and the pearliest, softest cheeks ever woman had! She’s older than I thought; she must be twenty-one or two. I wonder—but, no, she’s not married; she’s just a girl—a sweet, womanly girl.”

He placed a cigarette between his lips but forgot to light it.

“Kitty,” he murmured, “Kitty, Kitty of the Roses! Never was there a name that fitted as that does; she could have had no other name! Maud



KITTY OF THE ROSES

—Alice—Mary—Lilian — Florence—
none would have suited her ; Kitty
was made for her ! It never struck
me before as being a beautiful name
—Kitty. I wonder why ? It's abso-
lutely musical ! It's a poem, a love-
song ! It's——”

He sat up very straight and scowled
at the littered table.

“ Great Scott ! this won't do ! These
Enchanted Gardens are dangerous
places ; they evidently affect the
brain.”

He rescued his pen from the grass
and dipped it into the ink.

“ Or maybe the heart !”

He drew his sheets before him and
smoothed and arranged them. Then
he frowned intently. Presently he be-
gan to write :



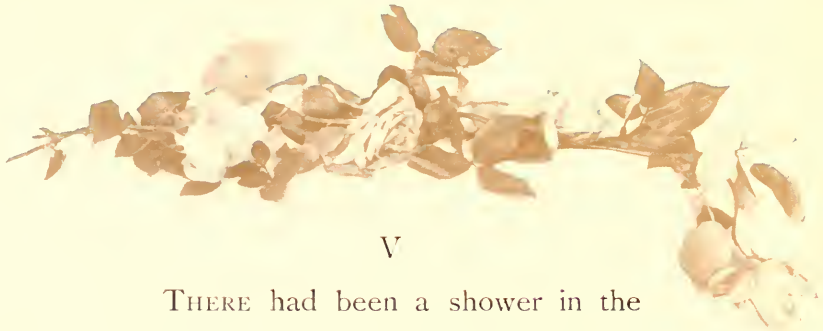
KITTY OF THE ROSES

“The crowning of these columns with the Roman Doric abacus is quite unjustifiable and altogether incongruous to the purist. Yet the effect in the eye of the layman is not unpleasing. It is difficult if not impossible to account——”

He looked up from the sheet before him with exultant eyes, the pen poised motionless in mid-air.

“I’ll swear there were dimples when she smiled!” he murmured joyously.





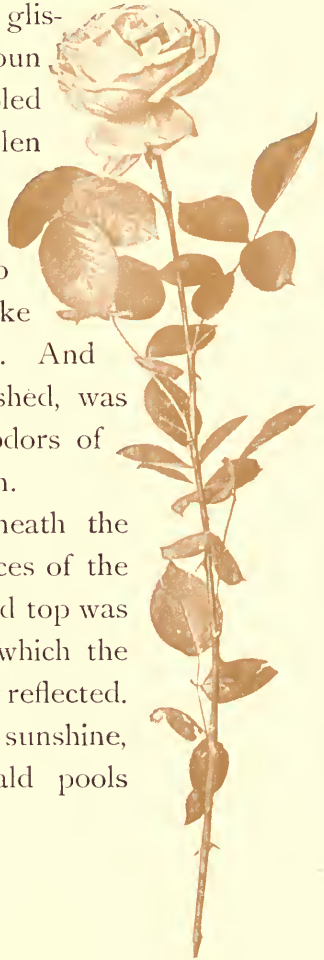
V

THERE had been a shower in the gray of the morning ; Burton remembered hearing the brisk patter of the falling drops against the sounding magnolia leaves while the open casement was still but an oblong of gray-black in the surrounding darkness ; and now, at nine o'clock, the garden was still moist in the sunlight and dripping in shadow. The Daphne-tree was gloriously fresh, the honey-flowers were drenched in crystal drops, and the bees, moving hoveringly from spray to spray, were in constant danger of shower-baths. Across the fence the

KITTY OF THE ROSES

roses were laughing as the sun, fiercely solicitous, dried leaf and bloom. The hedges were festooned with glistening webs of silver and spun glass in which gems trembled and scintillated. The fallen petals, rain-beaten, strewed beds and paths and were washed here and there into tiny ridges of pale colors like the rim of an artist's palette. And the air, renewed and refreshed, was fragrant with the mingled odors of the blossoms and moist loam.

Even Burton's table beneath the Daphne-tree showed evidences of the recent shower, for the painted top was spotted with tiny pools in which the greenery overhead was dimly reflected. Burton moved it into the sunshine, tipped it until the emerald pools



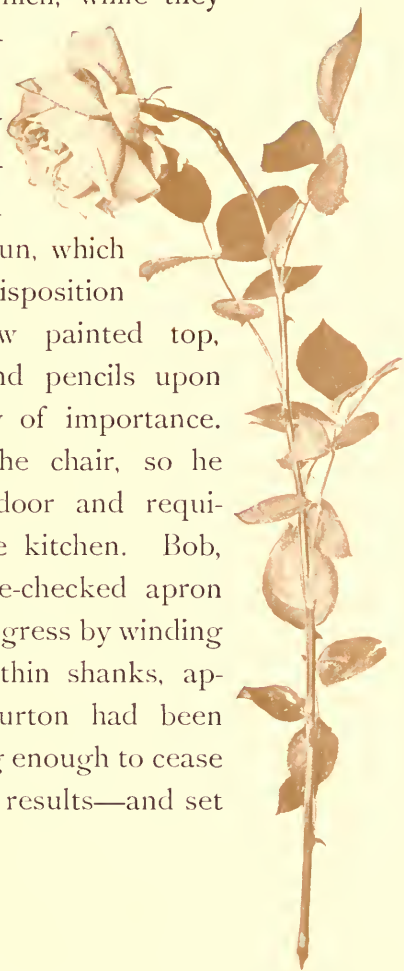
KITTY OF THE ROSES

trickled off, and left it there to dry while he lighted a cigarette and, between inhalations, cast casual glances over the rose-bushes at the neighboring door. But the door remained closed. A second cigarette followed the first. The table was quite dry by now, but Burton seemed to have forgotten its existence while he strolled to and fro along the path beside the house. Once he glanced at his watch a trifle impatiently ; it was after nine-thirty. He shook his head disapprovingly ; the Princess was late. Didn't she know, he wondered, that punctuality was a virtue in Princesses as well as in others ? Besides, it was growing very warm and she was keeping him from his work. Then he had the grace to blush mentally as he remembered



KITTY OF THE ROSES

the two pencils and the block of paper in his coat pocket which, while they might give the appearance of labor, were intended merely as a cloak for idleness. He rescued the table from the sun, which already showed a disposition to blister the yellow painted top, and laid his pad and pencils upon it with a great show of importance. He had forgotten the chair, so he went to the back door and requisitioned one from the kitchen. Bob, wearing a long blue-checked apron which impeded his progress by winding its folds about his thin shanks, appeared presently—Burton had been in Belle Harbour long enough to cease expecting immediate results—and set



KITTY OF THE ROSES

a kitchen chair before the table. Burton shook his head.

“No, Robert, the other side, if you please,” he said. “Your tastes may run towards brick walls and Daphne-trees, but mine prefer roses and enchantment. The other side, Robert.”

“Yessah, ve’y well, sah.” Bob had given up attempting to understand Burton, and had philosophically decided to pay no heed to his vagaries save to humor them whenever possible

and so earn as many as he might of the silver coins with which the Northerner’s pockets seemed to be filled. He placed the chair with its back to the Daphne-tree, wiped the seat of it with the end of his apron and grinned inquiringly.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

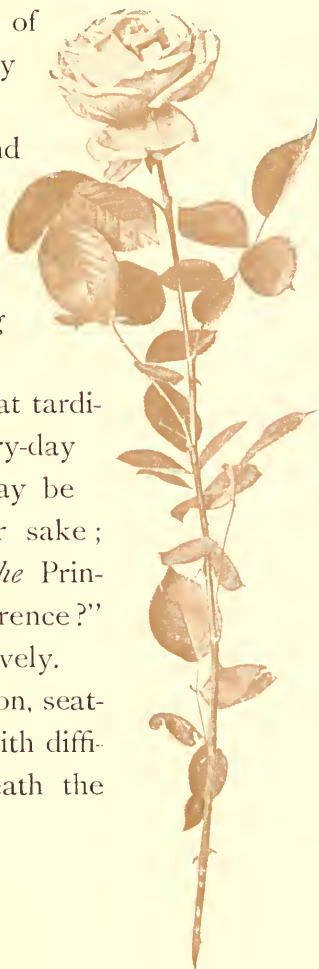
“Robert,” said Burton, “I presume that you agree with me in holding the lack of punctuality to be one of the deadliest of the deadly sins?”

Bob scratched his head and appeared to be giving the matter serious consideration. But as he made no reply Burton continued, accepting silence for consent.

“It seems to me, Robert, that tardiness in plain, ordinary every-day mortals like you and me may be forgiven; I hope so for your sake; but a Princess—I may say *the* Princess!—Eh? You see the difference?”

“Yessah,” said Bob explosively.

“Of course,” Burton went on, seating himself in the chair and with difficulty getting his knees beneath the

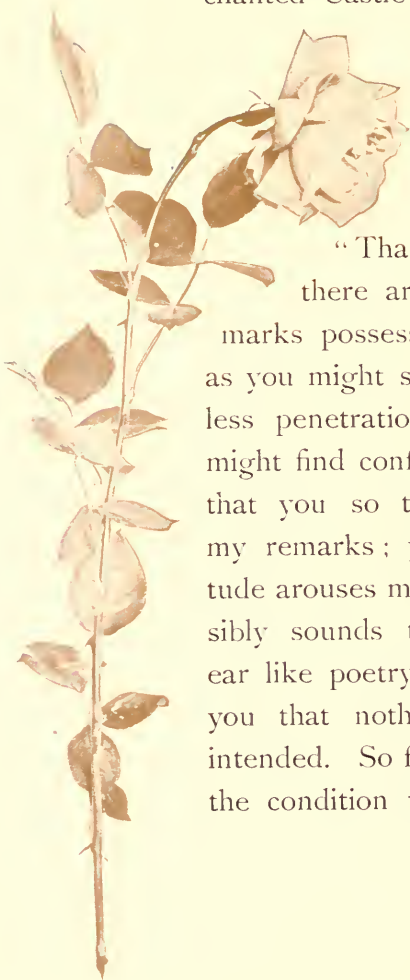


KITTY OF THE ROSES

table, "of course, living in an Enchanted Castle it may be that one is not at liberty to come and go as we are, Robert. You follow me, I trust?"

"Y-yessah!"

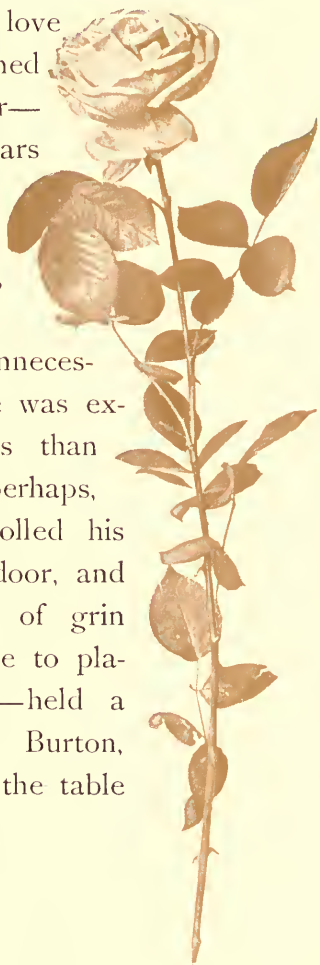
"Thank you. I realize that there are times when my remarks possess a certain involution, as you might say, which persons with less penetration than you, Robert, might find confusing. It pleases me that you so thoroughly understand my remarks; your sympathetic attitude arouses my gratitude. That possibly sounds to your finely-trained ear like poetry, Robert, but I assure you that nothing of the sort was intended. So far I have not reached the condition when poetry becomes



KITTY OF THE ROSES

necessary for the expression of thought. When I do reach that phase of the malady—for love has been not inaptly termed a malady, you'll remember—when I *do*, I say, your ears shall be the first to listen to my rhymed periods; that I promise you. But — no, thanks, I beg of you!"

The request seemed unnecessary, for Bob's countenance was expressive of other emotions than gratitude, chief of which, perhaps, was bewilderment. He rolled his eyes towards the kitchen door, and his settled grin—the sort of grin with which one might strive to placate a dangerous lunatic—held a trace of uneasiness. But Burton, leaning with his elbows on the table



KITTY OF THE ROSES

and levelling a drawing pencil at him, held him captive to his will.

“Robert,” he asked, “have you ever seen a Princess?”

“N-no, sah ; leastways, sah, not to know it.”

“Ah,” said Burton with a shake of his head, “that’s it! ‘Not to know it!’ Perhaps, Robert, you have met your Princess without recognizing her, have passed her on the street, at the market, in—Robert!”

“Sah?”

“How about cook? You don’t think that possibly—er—she might be your Princess?”

“Who, sah? Lavinia, sah? Ah reckon yo’ makin’ fun, Mister Burton. Why, she ain’ no Princess, sah ; she’s jes’ one dem no ‘count No’t’h Ca’lina niggers!”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

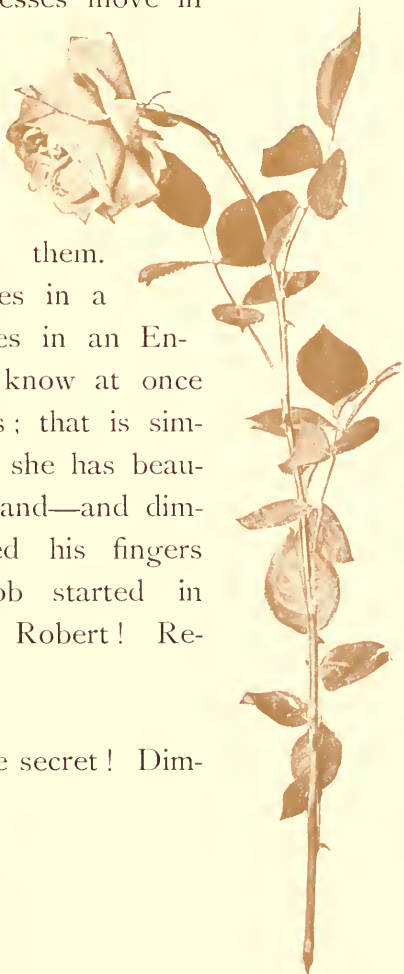
Burton nodded gravely.

“Perhaps you are right. Nevertheless, Robert, Princesses move in strange disguises, I have no doubt. Unfortunately, I am unable to acquaint you with any certain method of detecting them.

Of course, if she lives in a Castle and picks roses in an Enchanted Garden you know at once that she is a Princess; that is simplicity itself. Also, if she has beautiful soft brown eyes and—and dimples—” He snapped his fingers triumphantly and Bob started in alarm. “We have it, Robert! Rejoice!”

“Yessah, yessah!”

“That, Robert, is the secret! Dim-



KITTY OF THE ROSES

ples! Look for dimples! All Princesses have dimples. Aren't you awfully glad I thought of that? When you go back, Robert, observe Lavinia closely. If she has dimples"—he spread his hands wide—"there you are, you have found your Princess!"

"Ah reckon th' won't be no dimples, Mister Burton," said Bob lugubriously. "Ah reckon she'll jes' natu'ally snatch me bald-headed, sah, for not comin' back an' wipin' de dishes."

Burton shook his head sorrowfully.

"You pain me, Robert. All the time you have stayed here keeping me from my work you have been neglecting your own labors. That is not right. Return at once to the kitchen and the Princess Lavinia. Not



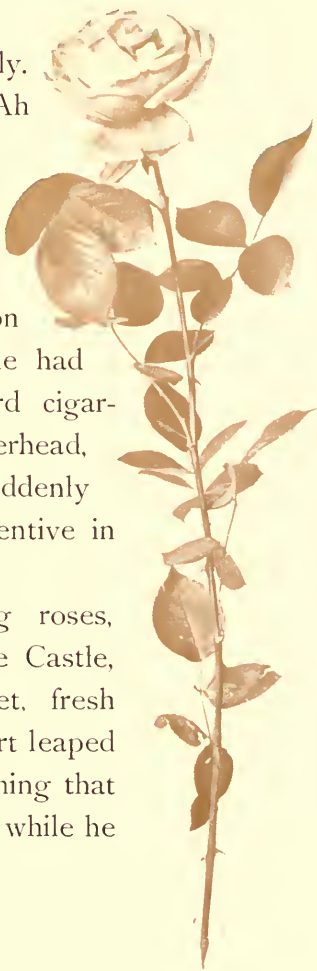
KITTY OF THE ROSES

a word! I refuse to listen any longer to your chatter."

"Yessah," said Bob eagerly. "Thank' y', sah. Anythin' Ah can git you, sah?"

"Nothing, Robert. Do not attempt to disarm my resentment; I am disappointed in you." Burton waved him away. When he had gone, Burton lighted a third cigarette, stretched his arms overhead, yawned inelegantly and—suddenly sat up very straight and attentive in the chair.

From across the nodding roses, from an open window of the Castle, floated again a girl's sweet, fresh voice in song. Burton's heart leaped and he tried to still his breathing that he might hear the better, the while he



KITTY OF THE ROSES

searched eagerly with his gaze the windows of the house beyond the rose-garden.

“ O Paradise, O Paradise, the world is growing old ;

Who would not be at rest and free where love is never cold ?

Where loyal hearts and true stand ever in the light,

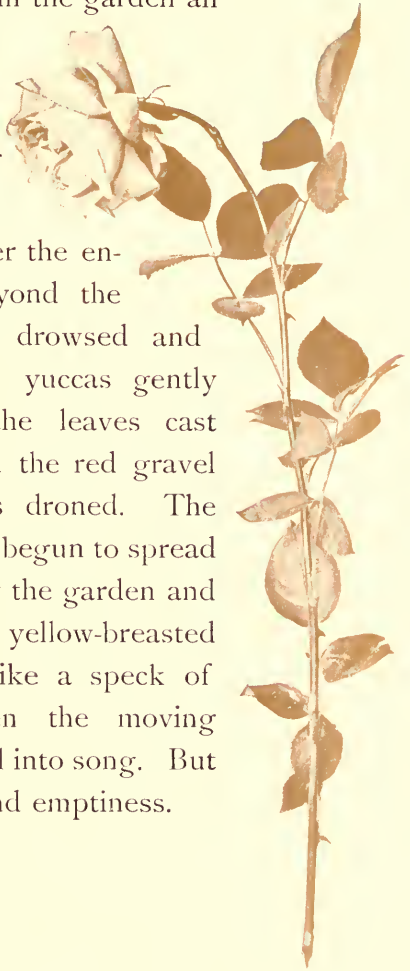
All rapture thro' and thro' in God's most holy sight ? ”

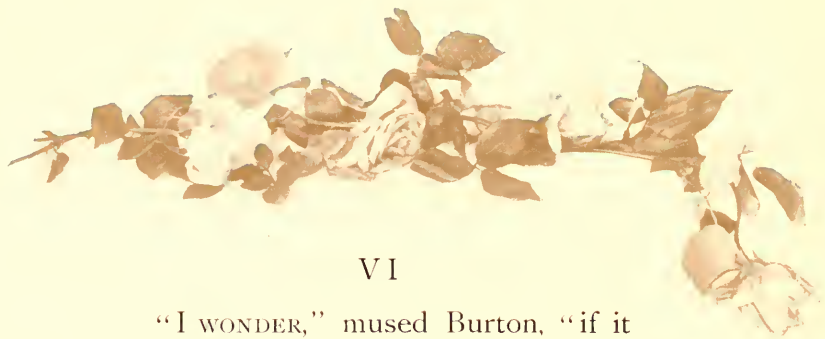
The words of the hymn died softly away and silence held the Castle again, a peaceful silence that now held for Burton a new significance. After a few moments he gathered his pencils and paper together and arose. The hymn had recalled to his mind a fact which he had lost sight of,—namely, that to-day was Sunday. And he knew enough of Belle Harbour and



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its customs to be sure that, even should he wait there in the garden all day long, he would not be rewarded with a glimpse of the Princess. At the door of the house he turned and looked again over the enchanting scene. Beyond the iron fence the roses drowsed and nodded sleepily, the yuccas gently swung their bells, the leaves cast flickering shadows on the red gravel paths, and the bees droned. The magnolia had already begun to spread its mellow gloom over the garden and from its depths a yellow-breasted songster, half seen like a speck of molten gold between the moving leaves, gushed its soul into song. But for the rest, silence and emptiness.



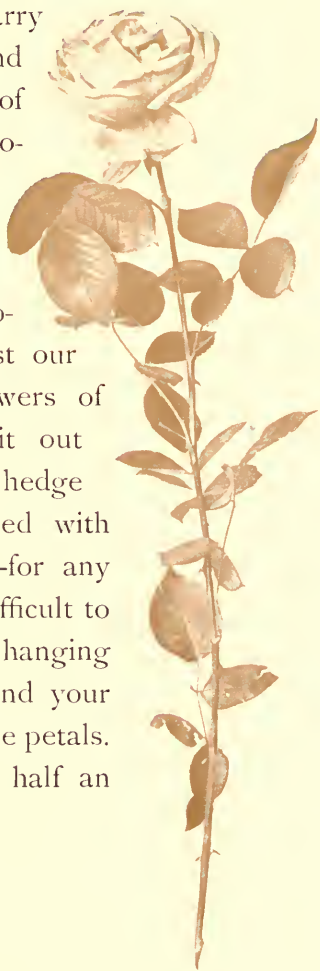


VI

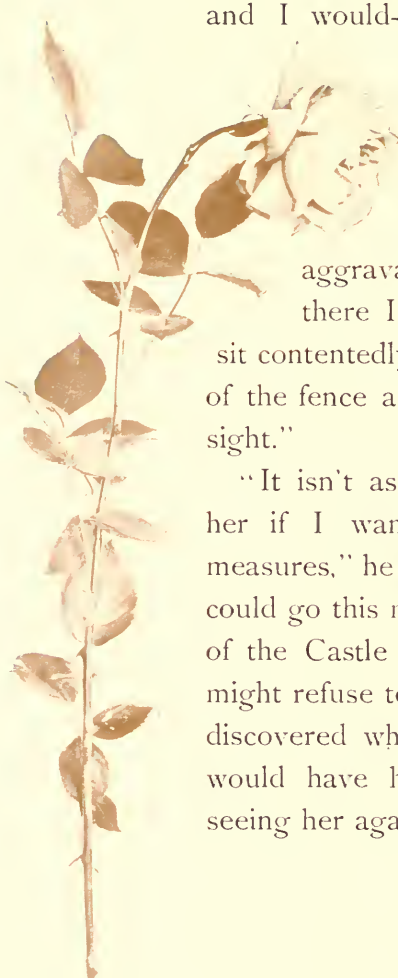
“I WONDER,” mused Burton, “if it ever rained in the Garden of Eden. And, if it did, I wonder if Adam was as bored as I am now. Of course he, lucky beggar, had Eve, while I—my Garden of Eden is Eveless. Come to think of it, though,—” and he smiled for the first time since he had lifted his head from the pillow to see the rain streaming relentlessly from a leaden sky—“come to think of it Eve and I would cut rather sorry figures out there in that dripping Eden. She, of course, would wear a little gray rain coat and a felt hat, while I would

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have to appear in rubber coat and sou'wester. And we'd each have to wear rubbers and, perhaps, carry umbrellas. It doesn't sound romantic. Not that Kitty of the Roses wouldn't be absolutely charming in a rain-coat, or that I am anything short of distinguished in that absurd garment of black rubber, only—well, it would test our tempers as well as our powers of entertainment to have to sit out there with our backs to a box hedge—probably quite well stocked with spiders and assorted bugs—for any length of time. It must be difficult to talk well when a raindrop is hanging from the end of your nose and your cheek is plastered with wet rose petals. I'm sure that at the end of half an



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hour Kitty would detest me cordially and I would—but no, my dear, I couldn't detest you under any circumstances. If you'll only make your appearance through that aggravating back door over there I'll fly to your side and sit contentedly on the sharpest picket of the fence as long as you'll stay in sight."

"It isn't as though I couldn't see her if I wanted to take extreme measures," he went on. "If I liked I could go this minute to the front door of the Castle and ask for her. She might refuse to speak to me when she discovered who I was, but, at least, I would have had the satisfaction of seeing her again."

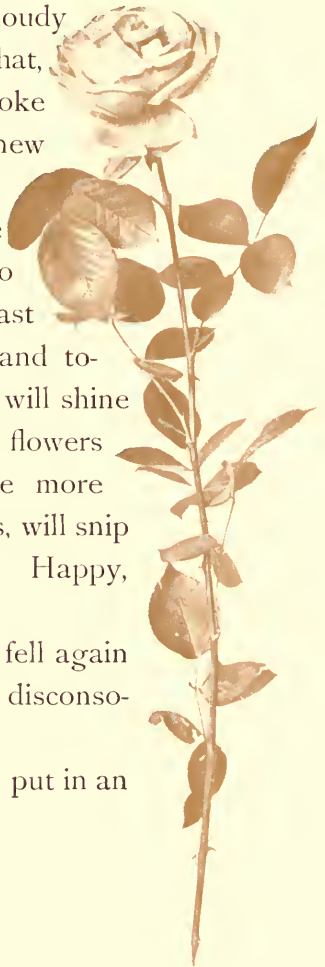
KITTY OF THE ROSES

The thought seemed to bring him a degree of comfort, for his face, which since rising had been as cloudy as the sky, lighted somewhat, and he blew cigarette smoke out into the rain with new gusto.

“But she wouldn’t like it; not a bit of it. And so I’ll worry through this beast of a day as well as I can, and to-morrow—to-morrow the sun will shine again, those sorry-looking flowers will raise their heads once more and Kitty, Kitty of the Roses, will snip them off with her shears. Happy, thrice blessed flowers !”

Suddenly his countenance fell again and his cigarette dangled disconsolately from drooping lips.

“I wonder though if she’ll put in an



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appearance to-morrow! Perhaps she thought me impertinent, a bit of a bounder! Perhaps she'll keep out of my way! Perhaps—but she can't

do that altogether, else what would become of the roses? She must come into the garden, and if she comes into the garden I shall see her. And I'll behave very, very well, oh, perfectly! And she'll say to herself, 'Poor fellow, his manners are really quite nice—for a

Northerner. And he seems rather harmless. I think I'll be kind to him.' And everything will be lovely!"

Cheered by his prophecies, he drew the table as near to the open window as the spattering raindrops permitted



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and resolutely took up his pen. For the first half-hour his gaze was more often on the door of the neighboring house than on his task. But after that the work—a paper on “Early Colonial Architecture in the South” to be read at a meeting of the Society of Architects—progressed finely, while the rain beat ceaselessly upon trees and shrubs and *pat, pattered* on the window-sill at his elbow.

By bedtime he had written the final word. After he had blown out his lamp he went to the window overlooking the Enchanted Garden. The back of the Castle was in darkness, but the rain had ceased, the dripping roses were scenting the night with their perfume and, high overhead, the moon peeped wanly through a rift in the clouds.





VII

"THEY are looking well after the rain," he suggested interrogatively. She had shown no disposition to avoid him, in fact, her rather distant inclination of the head had preceded his own bow by a flattering fraction of a second.

"Yes," she agreed, without, however, pausing in her task of filling her basket with great long-stemmed blooms. Burton left the table and leaned over the fence.

"On a day like yesterday one rather wishes oneself a rose-bush or

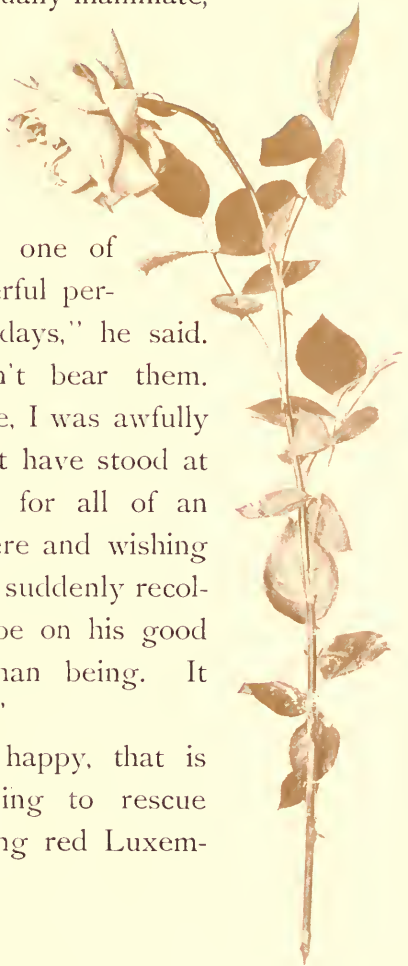
KITTY OF THE ROSES

tree or something equally inanimate, don't you think?"

"I don't think I ever have," she answered. "Why should one?"

"Perhaps you are one of those unnaturally cheerful persons who like rainy days," he said. "For my part, I can't bear them. Yesterday, for instance, I was awfully bored. I think I must have stood at my window up there for all of an hour looking down here and wishing for the sight of"--he suddenly recollected his resolve to be on his good behavior--"of a human being. It was a beast of a day!"

"You didn't look happy, that is true," she said, bending to rescue a fallen clump of flaring red Luxembourgs.



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“Then you saw me?” he asked eagerly.

“Why not? You stood in full sight at your window.”

“But—but I didn’t see you,” he answered aggrievedly. She shook her head.

“You couldn’t; I was in the kitchen making cake.”

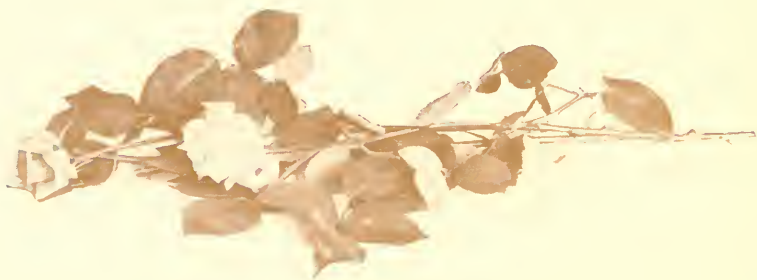
“Really?” From his tone one would have thought the making of cake a wonderful and quite unprecedented performance.

“Really,” she mocked smilingly.

“What—what kind?” He sought desperately in his mind for knowledge on the subject. “Gingerbread?”

“Chocolate layer cake,” she answered.

“Oh!” he sighed ecstatically.



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“Do you like it?” she asked, touched, perchance, by the pathos of his tone.

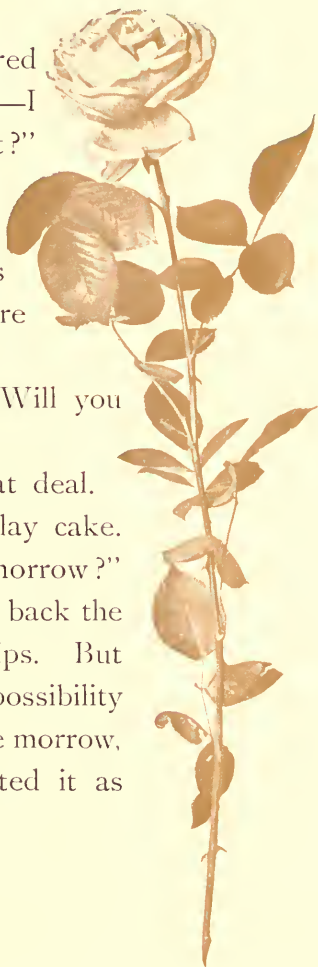
“Worship it!” he assured her. “I suppose you—er—I suppose you haven’t any left?”

“I think there is some,” she answered, striving to control the quivering corners of her delicious mouth. “Are you hungry?”

“Awfully,” he sighed. “Will you take pity on me?”

“I think you want a great deal. Yesterday it was roses, to-day cake. I wonder what it will be to-morrow?”

It was hard work keeping back the “You!” that rushed to his lips. But she had acknowledged the possibility of their meeting again on the morrow, nay, had practically suggested it as



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though it were a matter of course, and he took heart from that.

“I’ll say no more about the cake,” he said insinuatingly, “if you’ll give me the roses.”

“But I’m not sure I wouldn’t rather give you the cake,” she replied thoughtfully. “You see, the roses mean more to me.” Her eyes ranged slowly, lovingly over the garden. The shadow of her hat cast a warmer tone over one clear, creamy cheek, and Burton’s heart thumped immoderately.

“They would mean more, much more, to me, too,” he said softly, and his voice was not quite even. Perhaps she caught his meaning ; at least the shadowed



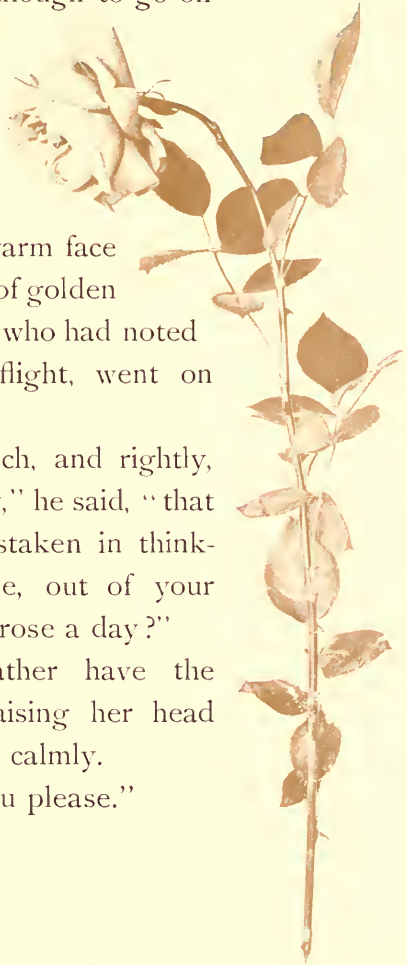
KITTY OF THE ROSES

cheek found new color, and she made a little movement as though to go on her way up the path towards the house. But — and perhaps, after all, she was not altogether displeased — she only bent her warm face over a tempting spray of golden blossoms, and Burton, who had noted the impulse toward flight, went on hurriedly :

“ One hears so much, and rightly, of Southern hospitality,” he said, “ that certainly I am not mistaken in thinking you will give me, out of your vast wealth, one little rose a day ?”

“ You wouldn't rather have the cake ?” she asked, raising her head and viewing him quite calmly.

“ No, the rose, if you please.”



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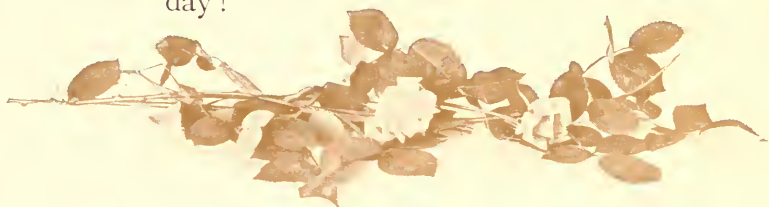
“But it was delicious cake,” she went on musingly. “It was really the best I ever made, and Aunt Amanda says I make very good cake.”

“I could never doubt that,” he answered gallantly.

“It was very high, and it had four layers of lovely chocolate cream filling and lots and lots of chocolate icing on top. Don't you like chocolate icing?”

“Awfully, but I like roses—some roses—far more.”

“Oh! But—every day? Don't you think that's rather often? Fresh roses will easily last three days without wilting, and if I gave you one this morning it ought to do until—let me see”—she counted the tips of three gloved fingers—“why, until Thursday!”



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But he shook his head with decision.

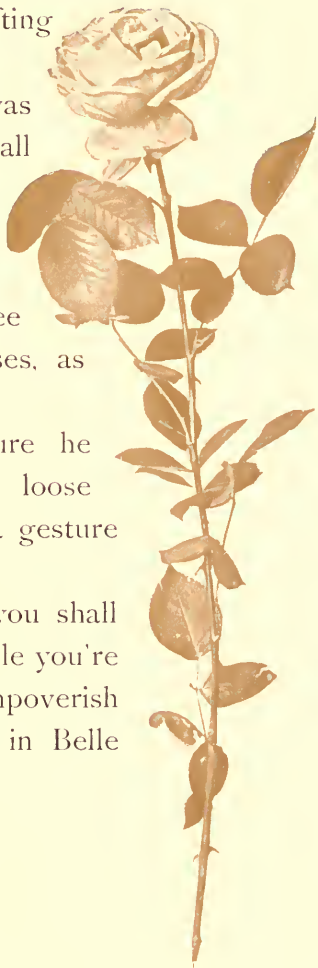
“It must be one a day.”

“Must?” she repeated with a tinge of emphasis and a slight lifting of her brows.

“Pardon me, *should* was what I meant to say. I shall soon begin to think you a miser. Perhaps if I look out into the garden some moonlight night I shall see you here counting your roses, as a miser counts his gold.”

She smiled at the picture he drew. Then, tossing some loose petals from her hand with a gesture of surrender,—

“Very well,” she said, “you shall have your one rose a day while you’re here. I reckon it won’t impoverish me, for no one never stays in Belle



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Harbour very long at a time—unless one lives here.”

He thought there was just a suggestion of interrogation in the remark.

“Don’t be too sure of that,” he replied. “I came down here for a fortnight, but I shan’t promise to go at the end of that period. You see, in New York I am not presented each day with a rose.”

“You must be very fortunate to be able to make your business affairs secondary to your whims,” she said a little unkindly.

“I am very fortunate,” he answered simply.

“But to stay here in our poor little shabby town just for a handful of roses?” she persisted. “It sounds rather silly, doesn’t it?”



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“Have I said,” he asked gently, a smile hovering under his moustache, “that it was altogether the roses? When you are tired of having me come a-begging to your garden fence send—send Aunt Amanda out with my rose.”

She laughed softly and caught up the skirt of her white gown in the hand that held the scissors.

“I will remember,” she said. “Good morning.”

“But my rose?” he cried in dismay.

“To-morrow,” she answered mockingly, “if Aunt Amanda is not too busy.”

She nodded and moved away towards the house.

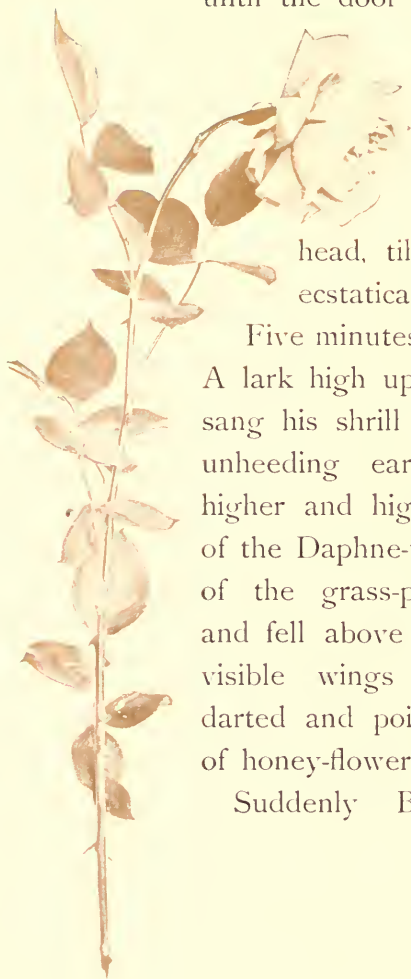


KITTY OF THE ROSES

Burton gazed ruefully after her until the door had hidden her from his sight. Then he went back to his chair under the Daphne-tree, clasped his hands behind his head, tilted back and sighed ecstatically.

Five minutes passed ; ten ; twenty. A lark high up in the magnolia-tree sang his shrill and florid melody to unheeding ears. The sun crept higher and higher until the shadow of the Daphne-tree reached the edge of the grass-plot. The bees rose and fell above the blossoms on invisible wings and humming-birds darted and poised along the tangle of honey-flowers.

Suddenly Burton's chair came



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down with a thud and he sat erect, a frown on his brow.

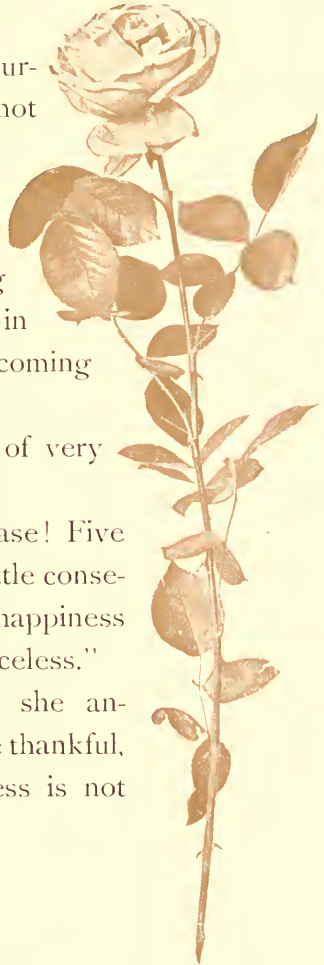
"Were there," he murmured, "or were there not dimples?"

"I think I must be repentant," he said the next morning. "I've been feeling strangely happy of late—in fact, ever since I saw you coming out of the house."

"Your repentance is not of very long standing," she scoffed.

"Don't discourage me, please! Five minutes of time may be of little consequence, but five minutes of happiness is so uncommon as to be priceless."

"You are unfortunate," she answered gravely. "I should be thankful, I suppose, that my happiness is not reckoned by minutes."



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“Unberufen!” he cried.

“Unberufen!” she echoed. Then their glances met and they laughed together. He saw with relief that the dimples were not mere creations of his imagination; they were there, appearing and disappearing on the clear, soft cheeks. He held a withered spray of roses across the fence.

“You are prepared to fulfil your promise?” he asked.

“Are you sure I promised?”

“Absolutely!”

“I said *perhaps*.”

“Impossible! Do you imagine that I would have got out of bed at six o'clock this morning, bolted my breakfast, and waited here under this absurd tree for nearly an hour and a half unless I had been certain of the reward?”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Really? But you don’t look hungry.”

“I’m starved—for roses; absolutely famishing!”

“How awful!” she exclaimed in awe-struck tones.

“Wait, then.”

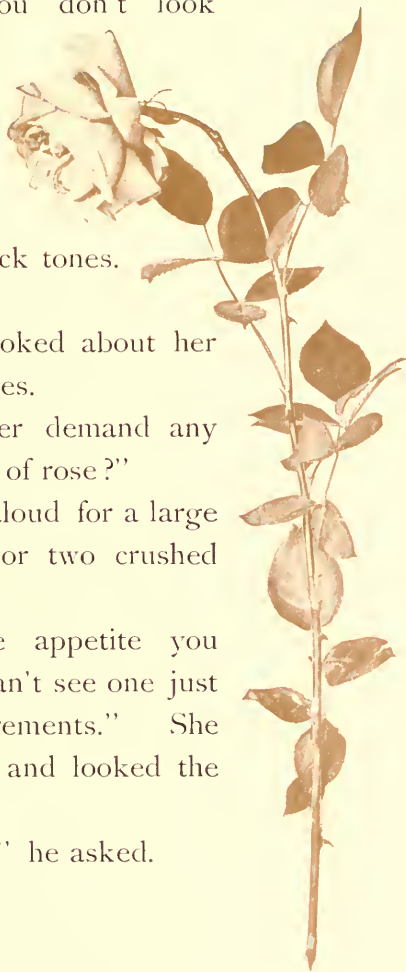
She turned and looked about her over the laden branches.

“Does your hunger demand any especial kind or color of rose?”

“It does; it cries aloud for a large pink rose with one or two crushed petals.”

“What a strange appetite you have! I’m afraid I can’t see one just filling those requirements.” She creased her forehead and looked the garden over.

“May I help you?” he asked.



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"I wish you would."

"Then I will respectfully suggest that the rose you wear exactly fits the description. In fact, strange as it may seem, it appears to have been fashioned with that end in view."

He met her glance with one of serene and self-satisfied composure. Her eyes dropped to the blossom in question and she lifted it and examined it carefully.

"It is strange," she mused. "Here are the crushed petals and all." He held out his hand. "But, then, there are larger roses and pinker ones, beyond doubt, and as for crushed petals—why, they are easily made." She moved towards a bush of immense cabbage-roses and put forth her scissors.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“One moment!” he cried. She turned, mutely questioning.

“Appetites,” he went on plausibly, “are capricious things—mine especially. Having once set itself upon a certain thing it rejects all others, no matter how similar in outward appearance they may be. My hunger craves the rose you wear. I throw myself—and my hunger—upon your mercy! Be generous! You see before you a starving man!”

She turned back with a little gesture of despair and slowly, hesitatingly, detached the blossom from her gown.

“Of course I can’t refuse a starving man,” she said.

“It would be quite impossible,” he answered.

“And so”—she stretched the pink



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blossom out to him and he seized it greedily across the fence—"I shall take credit to myself for having saved your life," she said soberly.

"Please do so every minute of the day," he begged. "And now——" He held forth the withered spray he had received the day before. But she shook her head.

"I have so many fresh ones, you see."

"But it was a part of the bargain!" he pleaded.



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“Was it?” She accepted the limp cluster of faded blooms, viewed it carelessly, and dropped it to the path, where it lay, a pathetic symbol of Beauty’s perishableness.

“Kitty,” he said to himself, “you’re a minx, a dear, charming little minx!”

“Please tell me,” he said aloud, “what you do with yourself all the rest of the time?”

She looked across questioningly.

“After you leave the garden, I mean. I see you for a minute or two and then you utterly disappear and never come back—until the next morning. Do you live in a real house? Is there a front door to it? Or is it an enchanted palace? If I searched, could I find it, or would folks merely look at me compassionately and shake their heads if I asked



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them to direct me to the Castle of the Roses?"

"Oh, I'm sure they'd shake their heads," she laughed, "if you asked for that. But there is a front door."

"And if I were to come to it and ask—ask for the Princess——"

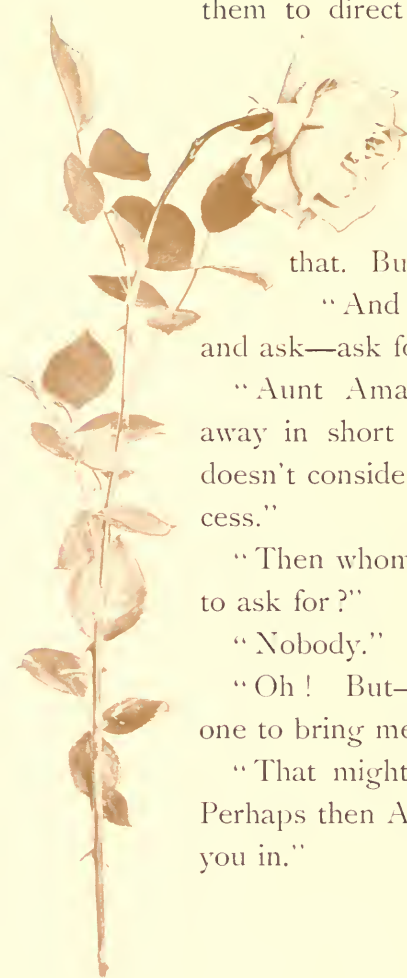
"Aunt Amanda would send you away in short order. You see, she doesn't consider me exactly as a princess."

"Then whom would you advise me to ask for?"

"Nobody."

"Oh! But—if I should get someone to bring me?"

"That might be different, I reckon. Perhaps then Aunt Amanda would let you in."



KITTY OF THE ROSES

"And the Ogre? I would not be eaten alive?"

"The Ogre?" she asked, puzzled.

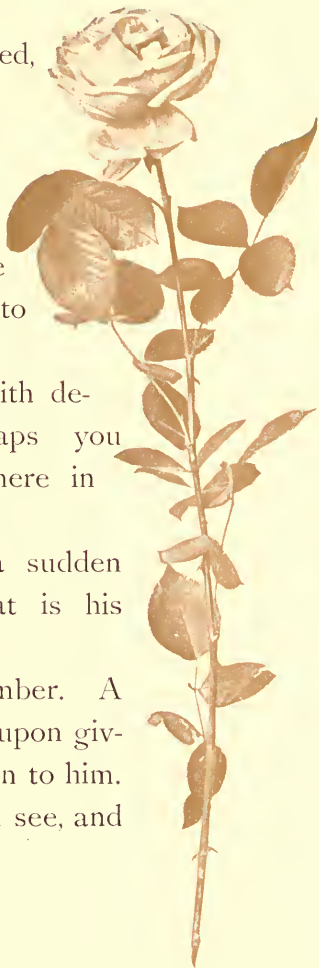
"Yes; I heard him calling you one morning."

"Oh," she laughed, "the Ogre! Well, now as for the Ogre—— But you'd have to risk the Ogre."

"I will!" he exclaimed with decision. "Only—— Perhaps you know a Colonel Barrett here in Belle Harbour?"

"Barrett?" She shot a sudden glance of surprise. "What is his first name?"

"I—really, I don't remember. A friend in Baltimore insisted upon giving me a letter of introduction to him. I don't fancy them much, you see, and



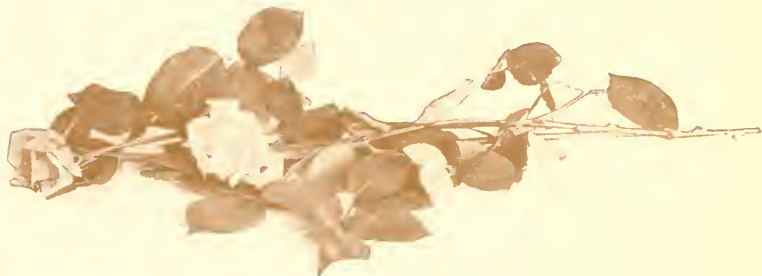
KITTY OF THE ROSES

so I've never presented it. But now —if you think—that is, you know, if Colonel Barrett knows the Ogre—or Aunt Amanda—” He paused suggestively.

“There is a Colonel Robert Barrett here,” she said, “and I've met him. And I think”—she was smiling as though the mention of the Colonel's name evoked humorous recollections —“I think he knows the Ogre.”

“Really?” he cried. “Then I must find him out. When you come to think of it now, a letter of introduction is something that shouldn't be neglected, should it?”

“I never had one,” she replied demurely. Then, catching sight of the neglected basket of roses, “Oh, just see,” she exclaimed remorsefully, “they're all withering!”



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“Not enough to hurt,” he said.
“Besides, there are lots more.”

But she shook her head and, with the basket over one arm and scissors and skirts in hand, turned towards the house.

“Good-morning,” she said.

“Oh, but wait.”

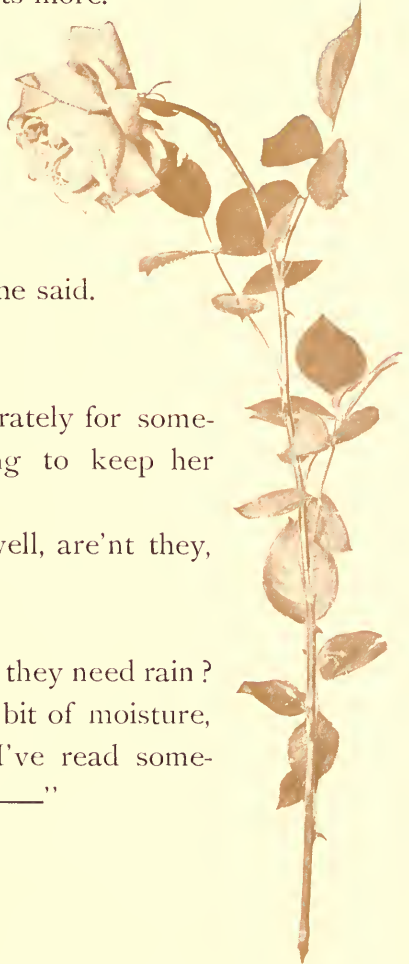
“Well?”

He searched desperately for something to say, anything to keep her there. Finally,—

“They’re looking well, aren’t they, the roses?”

“Oh, yes.”

“But—er—perhaps they need rain? Roses require a good bit of moisture, don’t they? I think I’ve read somewhere that—er—that——”



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“ Good-morning.” She turned away again, smiling deliciously when her back was towards him, and went quickly up the path.

“ Good-morning,” he called regretfully. Then :

“ Confound it, I did read something about roses and moisture somewhere ! Now, what was it ? Just like my silly memory to go back on me when most needed ! I shall read up on roses ; everyone ought to know about flowers.”

He gathered up his papers and writing utensils and went up to his room. There he placed the pink rose in a goblet of water and, in the manner of one performing a sacred rite, pressed his lips to the crushed petals.

“ This afternoon,” he said, “ I will

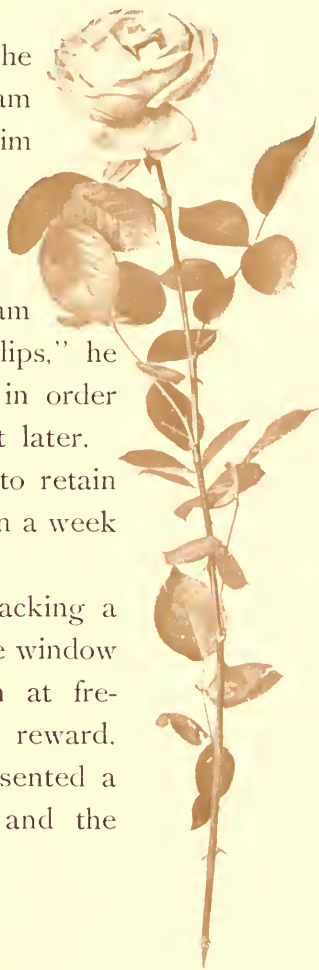


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present my letter to the worthy Colonel."

But he didn't, for with the afternoon came a telegram from New York calling him back. For a few moments he railed eloquently at fate: in the end he accepted her command with ill grace: "I am leaving my trunk, Mrs. Phillips," he explained to his landlady, "in order that I may return and get it later. Meanwhile I shall be glad to retain the rooms. I shall be back in a week or ten days, I fancy."

During the operation of packing a suit-case he made trips to the window overlooking the rose-garden at frequent intervals, but without reward. The back of the Castle presented a sleepy, undisturbed aspect, and the



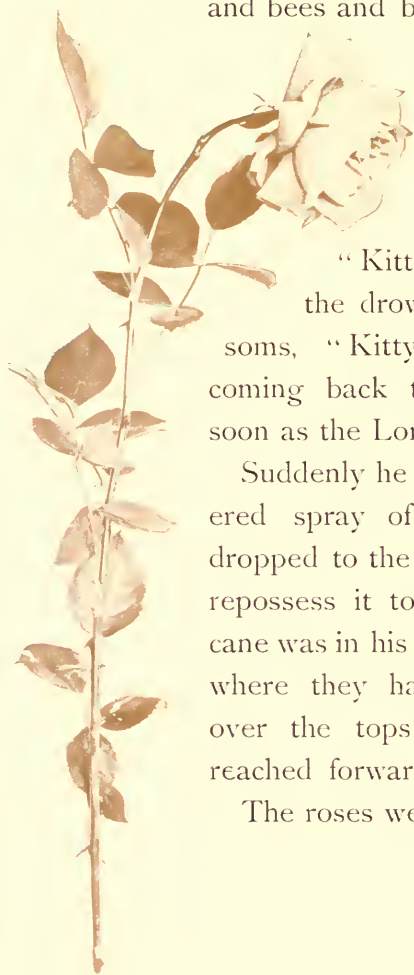
KITTY OF THE ROSES

garden was empty of all life save birds and bees and butterflies. Just before it was time to leave for his train he went down to the iron fence and looked mournfully across.

“Kitty,” he whispered to the drowsing leaves and blossoms, “Kitty of the Roses, I’m coming back to you, dear, just as soon as the Lord will let me.”

Suddenly he remembered the withered spray of roses that she had dropped to the path, and a desire to repossess it took hold of him. His cane was in his hand and he knew just where they had fallen. He leaned over the tops of the pickets and reached forward. Then he stopped.

The roses were gone.





VIII

BURTON returned to Belle Harbour and King's Street just two weeks later to a day. It was dusk when he stepped on the station platform, and starlit darkness when, followed by a tattered and grinning little darky bearing his luggage, he reached his lodgings. His first act was to throw open the bowed shutters and look out upon the Enchanted Garden. It was a dark expanse of bush and hedge, with here and there an uncertain fleck of gray where the wan light from the sky caught a white blossom. Beyond, the house was empty of light. Something

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—what he scarcely knew—in the aspect of house and garden oppressed him ; had he believed in premonitions he would have accepted that as one of ill augury. He turned away with a shrug of impatience and lighted his lamp.

In the morning he leaped out of bed and again thrust aside the blinds. His heart sank. The Enchanted Garden was still below him ; but it looked unmistakably neglected and uninhabited. Most of the roses were through blooming for the while and what blossoms there were seemed faded and imperfect. The blinds in the rear of the Castle

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were all tightly closed ; the hammock was gone from the porch ; the vines looked dusty. In a sudden panic of alarm Burton strode to the hall and called loudly for Bob.

“Have those people in that house over there gone away?” he demanded when the darky appeared.

“Which house is dat, sah?”

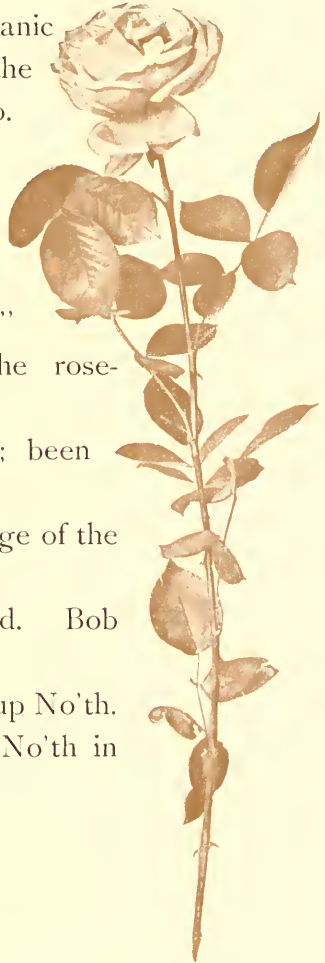
“There, idiot—beyond the rose-garden ! Have they gone?”

“Oh, yessah ; they gone ; been gone a week, I reckon.”

Burton sat down on the edge of the bed and groaned. Then,—

“Where?” he demanded. Bob shook his head :

“I dunno, sah ; somewhars up No'th. The Colonel he al'ays goes No'th in summer.”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“The Colonel?”

“Yessah, Colonel Barrett. Wasn't you askin' about——”

“*Barrett!*” Burton seized Bob by the arm and dragged him to the case-ment. “Look here,” he said desperately, “do you mean to tell me that Colonel Barrett lives in that house, the one with the rose-garden behind it?”

“Y-yessah, I surely does, sah.”

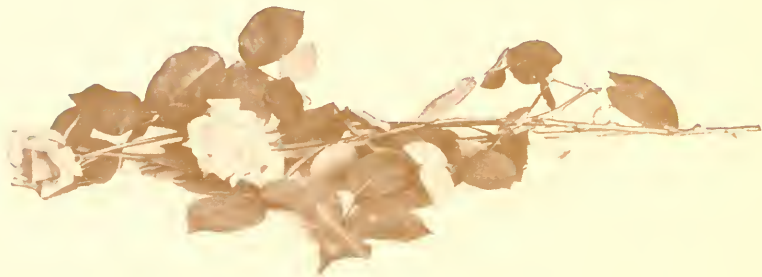
“You're not mistaken?”

“No, sah; why, I knows the Colonel well!”

“Then why didn't you tell me this before, you fool nigger? Why didn't you tell me Colonel Barrett lived there?”

“Yo' didn't ask me!”

“Oh, get out of here!” groaned



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Burton. "Hold on, though. Has the Colonel a daughter?"

"No, sah, he ain' never got mahied."

"Then——" cried Burton in sudden hope.

"He got a niece, though."

"Oh! So she's his niece? What's her name?"

"Name's Miss Kitty."

"I know that," said the other impatiently. "What's the rest of it?"

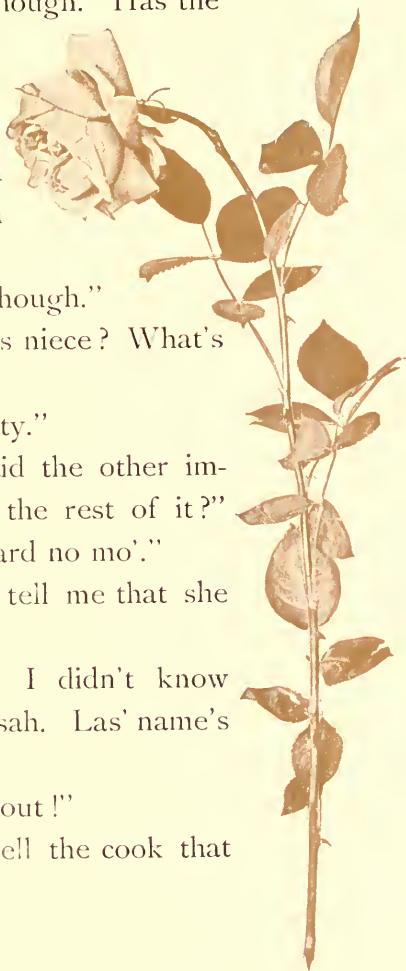
"Ah ain' never heard no mo'."

"Do you mean to tell me that she has no last name?"

"Oh, *las'* name! I didn't know you meant *las'* name, sah. *Las'* name's Fletcher, o' co'se!"

"That's all. Get out!"

Bob departed to tell the cook that



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“Mister Burton he done wen’ crazy,” and the subject of the announcement remained for many minutes sitting on the bed in his pajamas gazing out into the Enchanted Garden and mentally heaping maledictions upon himself. The thought of the letter of introduction in his trunk was maddening. It was all very plain now; no wonder she had smiled when he had asked about the Colonel!

“Oh Kitty, Kitty!” he muttered, “you’re the cruel one!”

After breakfast he packed his trunk hurriedly and then, armed with the letter, sallied forth. Down King’s Street he went to the first corner; here a half-obliterated sign, nailed against the trunk of a giant oak, bore the legend “Mary Street;” he counted



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the houses and chose the third one. Emptiness was written all over its sleepy, red-brick front. Nevertheless he knocked, and waited. After many minutes the door was opened cautiously and an aged negro—he was certain it was Aunt Amanda—stuck her head through the narrow aperture.

“Is Colonel Barrett at home?” asked Burton.

“No, sah, he gone up No'th.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed Burton, simulating intense surprise and dismay. “I have a letter of introduction to him. Can you tell me where he has gone?”



KITTY OF THE ROSES

"New Yo'k."

"And the address there?"

"Can' tell yo' that, sah; reckon, though, jes' 'New Yo'k' will fin' him."

"But isn't there anyone here in town that can give me his address?"

"Don' reckon so."

"But his mail, where does that go?"

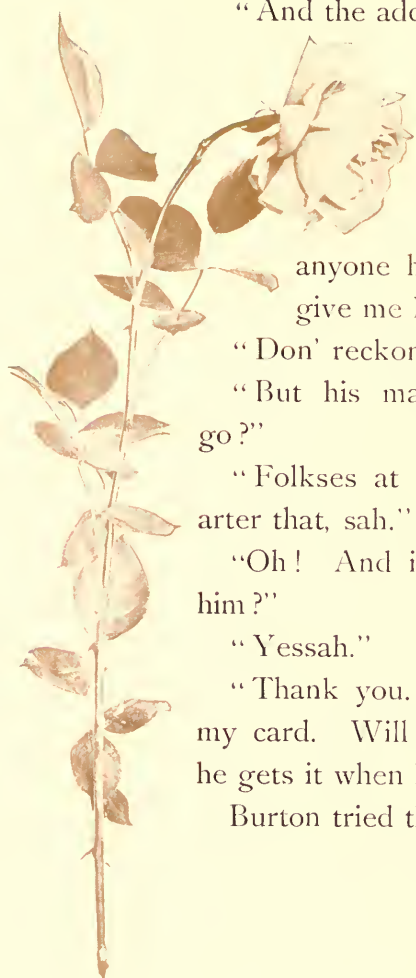
"Folkses at the pos'-office lookin' arter that, sah."

"Oh! And is Miss Fletcher with him?"

"Yessah."

"Thank you. I think I will leave my card. Will you kindly see that he gets it when he returns?"

Burton tried the post-office without,



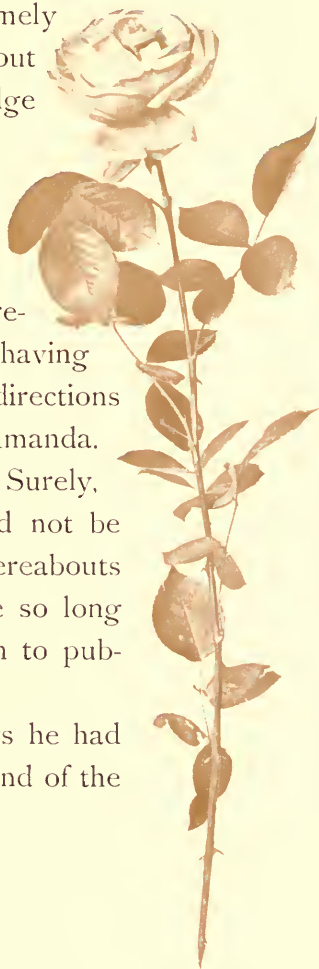
KITTY OF THE ROSES

however, much hope of success. And, as he had expected, the post-mistress, an elderly lady with an extremely suspicious expression about her thin lips, refused to divulge any information.

"It's a rule of the Department," she explained severely.

That evening Burton returned to New York without having obtained any more explicit directions than those given by Aunt Amanda. But he was not hopeless. Surely, he assured himself, it would not be difficult to discover the whereabouts of the Colonel and his niece so long as hotel registers were open to public inspection.

But at the end of two days he had changed his mind. At the end of the



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third he gave up the search. New York had swallowed the Princess and the Ogre! Burton returned to his affairs, which had begun to suffer, and strove, for their good, to banish thoughts of Belle Harbour and the Enchanted Garden and Kitty of the Roses from his mind. But the task he had set himself was a difficult one; and just when it seemed that he was arriving at some degree of success, lo! a prankish Fate interposed.

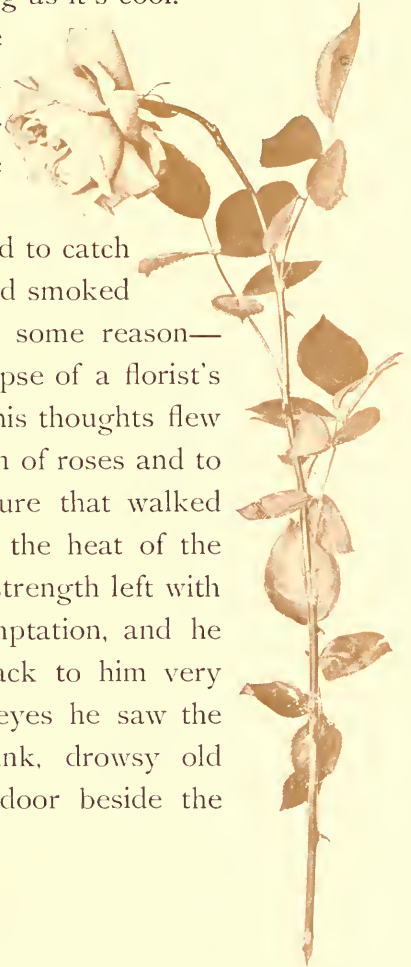
It was well into July. New York had been sweltering all day under hot, cloudless skies, and even the darkness brought no relief. To stay indoors was out of the question, and so Burton dragged himself from an already deserted club after a late dinner and hailed a hansom.



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“Drive around,” he directed,—
“any old place so long as it’s cool.”

Cabby turned the horse’s head up-town and it trotted listlessly along over the still heated asphalt. Burton leaned forward to catch what air there was and smoked and meditated. For some reason—perhaps it was a glimpse of a florist’s window that did it—his thoughts flew southward to a garden of roses and to a small, graceful figure that walked therein. Fagged by the heat of the long day, he had no strength left with which to combat temptation, and he yielded. It came back to him very vividly; closing his eyes he saw the garden and the blank, drowsy old house; he saw the door beside the



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rose-vines open and a white-gowned figure trip down the steps. She came nearer and nearer, smiling, happy-eyed, the broad brim of her hat lifting in the breeze and chasing the edge of the mellow shadow over her cheek. Never before had her face come back to him so clearly. In the length of eight blocks he lived over those precious mornings minute by minute. In the middle of the ninth he was suffering all the torments of a despairing lover of twenty. He hurled the dead cigar from his lips to the pavement and thrust up the trap with his cane.

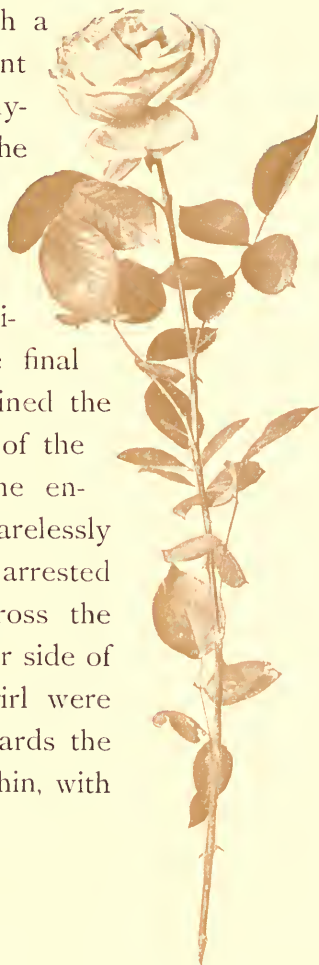
“This won’t do,” he muttered savagely; and aloud, “Stop here; I’ve had enough.”

On the curb he found himself

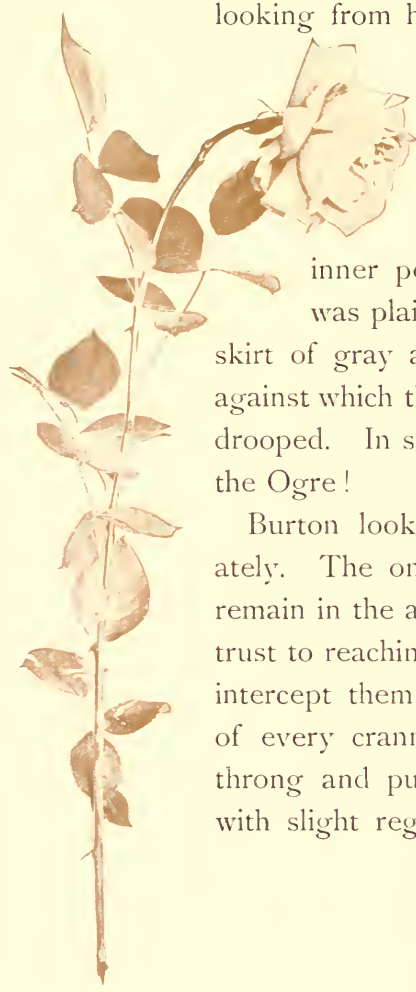


KITTY OF THE ROSES

bathed in the bright glare of many lights ; he had landed at the entrance of an uptown theatre. With a shrug of his shoulders he went in. "As well here as anywhere," he thought. Of the entertainment he recalled but little the next day. But the theatre was fairly cool and the music bright and eminently cheerful. When the final curtain had descended he joined the pushing throng at the right of the house. Half-way towards the entrance his eyes, ranging carelessly over the scene, were suddenly arrested and his heart leaped. Across the rows of empty seats, at the far side of the theatre, a man and a girl were slowly making their way towards the door. The man was tall, thin, with



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grizzled hair and moustache, Southern-looking from head to heel, and about fifty years of age. The girl was slight and rather small, with brown hair and warm skin hued like the inner petals of a rose. She was plainly dressed in a street skirt of gray and a white shirt-waist against which three or four pink roses drooped. In short, it was Kitty—and the Ogre!

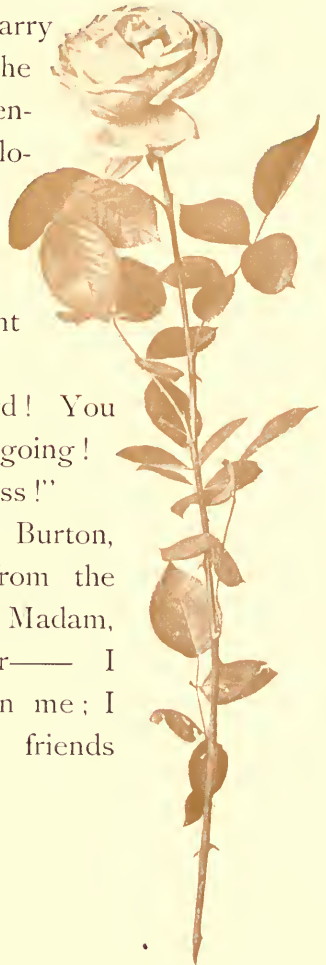
Burton looked about him desperately. The only course open was to remain in the aisle where he was and trust to reaching the lobby in time to intercept them. He took advantage of every cranny and crevice in the throng and pushed his way through with slight regard for toes or skirts.

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It seemed hours before he reached the entrance. Now and then he was able to catch sight of his quarry over the shoulders of the throng. It was while so engaged that he heard an eloquent sound of rending silk and felt himself seized roughly by the arm. He turned to face an indignant cavalier.

“Sir, you are very awkward! You should look where you are going! You have torn this lady’s dress!”

“I am very sorry,” replied Burton, striving to wrest himself from the other’s clutch. “Believe me, Madam, I am deeply grieved and—er—— I beg of you, sir, don’t detain me; I am trying to reach some friends who——”



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“Deuce take your friends, sir!
Your clumsiness——”

But Burton wrenched himself free and plunged into the lobby, followed by muttered execrations from those whom he unceremoniously thrust from his path. But the delay had cost him dear. The Princess and the Ogre were not to be seen. He rushed to the street door just in time to catch a fleeting glimpse of a gray skirt disappearing into a brougham.

“Kitty!” he called, and struggled across the sidewalk.

The door closed, the driver snapped his lash, and the carriage rolled away. And yet for an instant he was certain a face had looked from the window and a hand had rested upon the sill. He hailed a hansom.



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“Keep that brougham in sight,” he said hurriedly. “There’s a five-dollar bill in it if you do!” With one foot on the step he paused, stooped, and lifted something from the asphalt.

It was a pink rose.

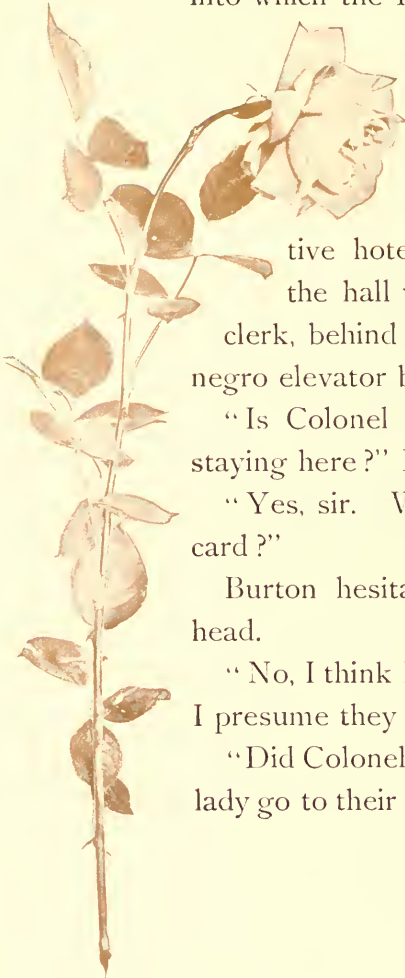
The driver’s task was not a hard one. The brougham went northward slowly for a few blocks and then turned to the west down a quiet side street. Presently Burton’s conveyance stopped.

“All right, sir,” said the driver.

The brougham had paused some dozen doors beyond and its passengers were alighting. Burton descended, dis-



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missed his cab, and keeping the house into which the Princess and the Ogre had disappeared in sight, walked leisurely towards it. It proved to be a small, unpretentious, but attractive hotel. When he entered the hall was empty save for a clerk, behind the tiny desk, and a negro elevator boy.

“Is Colonel Barrett, of Virginia, staying here?” Burton asked.

“Yes, sir. Will you send up your card?”

Burton hesitated; then shook his head.

“No, I think I’ll wait until morning; I presume they have retired?”

“Did Colonel Barrett and the young lady go to their room, Billy?” the clerk

KITTY OF THE ROSES

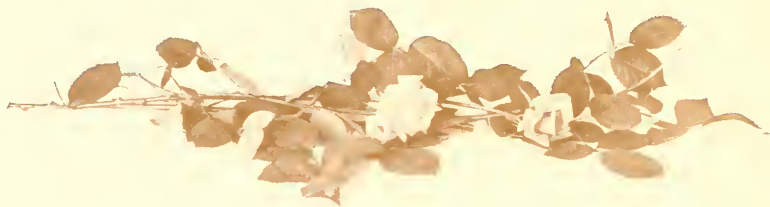
inquired. The elevator boy nodded sleepily. Burton turned away and walked homeward through the breathless streets with a triumphant joy and a fragrant pink rose for companions. To-morrow he would see Kitty, his Kitty, Kitty of the Roses!



He went to his office early the following morning, and at ten o'clock, summoning a hansom, had himself driven to a florist's. There he purchased two dozen and one roses and personally superintended the packing and dispatching of them. His selection may have struck the attendant as

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somewhat unique, consisting, as it did, of a dozen white blossoms, a dozen pink ones, and a single half-blown bud of deep crimson ; but Burton, remembering Kitty's wont, thought she would understand. After the flowers had been sent he hesitated a moment on the curb. In the end he sent the cab away. He did not want to present himself at the hotel before eleven ; the thought of sitting inactive in a club window was distasteful ; he would walk slowly uptown. So he crossed to the Avenue and, lighting a fresh cigarette, idled from window to window in a desperate attempt to kill time. He allowed no display on the shady side of the street to pass unexamined, and by the time he had reached his northerly goal his brain was a kaleidoscope of sport-



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ing prints, French landscapes, jewelry, silk stockings, bric-à-brac, lingerie, and smokers' articles. But it was eleven o'clock!

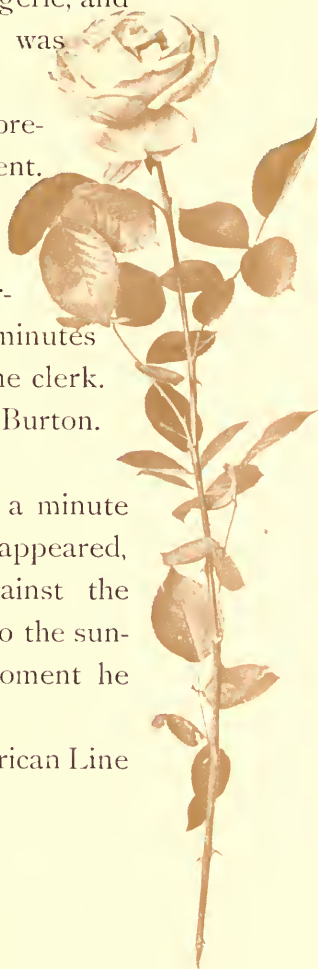
This time there was no premonition of disappointment. He sought the desk and produced his card.

"Sorry, but Colonel Barrett and his niece left ten minutes ago for the steamer," said the clerk.

"Steamer!" gasped Burton. "What steamer?"

"I'll find out for you in a minute from the porter." He disappeared, leaving Burton leaning against the desk staring blankly out onto the sun-smitten pavement. In a moment he returned.

"Trunks went to the American Line pier, sir."



KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Thank you,” Burton muttered. Then, turning suddenly at the doorway, “What time is the sailing?”

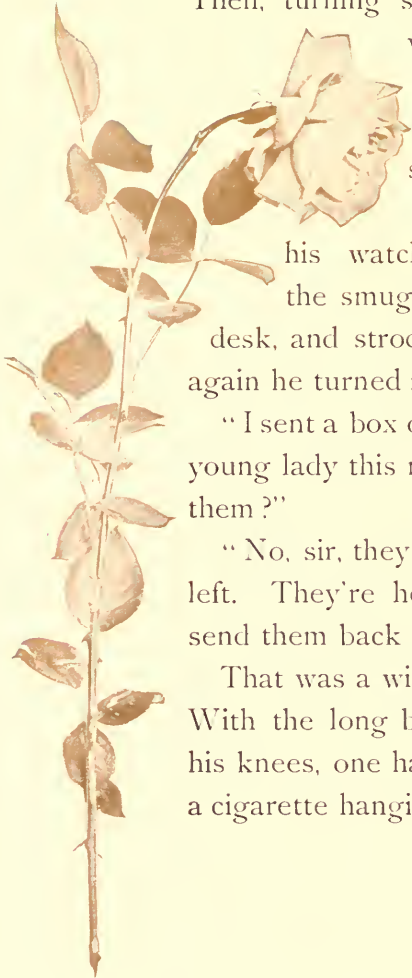
“Half after twelve, sir, I believe.”

Burton glanced at his watch, compared it with the smug-faced clock over the desk, and strode to the steps. But again he turned :

“I sent a box of flowers here for the young lady this morning ; did she get them ?”

“No, sir, they came just after she’d left. They’re here ; I was going to send them back to the florist’s.”

That was a wild race against time ! With the long box of roses between his knees, one hand on his watch, and a cigarette hanging unlighted from his



KITTY OF THE ROSES

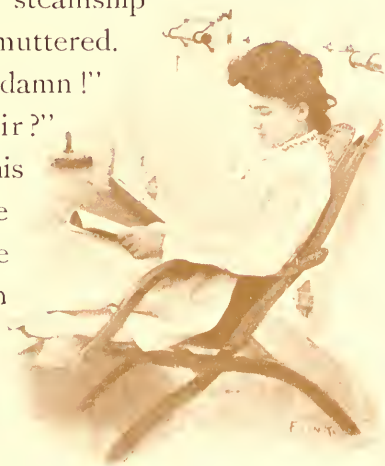
lips, Burton sat like a stern-faced Fate and was whirled from the hotel to the wharf in what was practically one long bump. When the horse was pulled back on his haunches before the pier entrance there was no need to ask questions: a stream of persons whose handkerchiefs still hung from their hands was emerging into the hot sunlight.

With a groan Burton threw himself back against the cushions.

"Never before in the history of ocean travel has a steamship left on time," he muttered.

"But to-day—oh, damn!"

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver, his red, perspiring face glowing above the opened trap. Burton



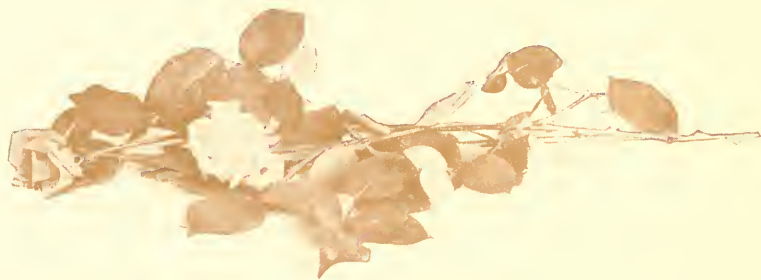
KITTY OF THE ROSES

gulped, and then gave his office address. The wearied horse and creaking hansom crept dejectedly uptown again through close, furnace-like streets and over pavements that threw the heat upward with intolerable intensity. Burton thought of the open, wind-swept ocean and cursed weakly. When the hansom came to a stop in front of the narrow, white-marble monstrosity on the tenth floor of which was his office, he paid three prices to the driver and strode towards the entrance. The cabman called after him,—

“Hi, sir, you’ve forgotten your flowers!”

Burton turned and scowled ferociously.

“I don’t want them,” he said.

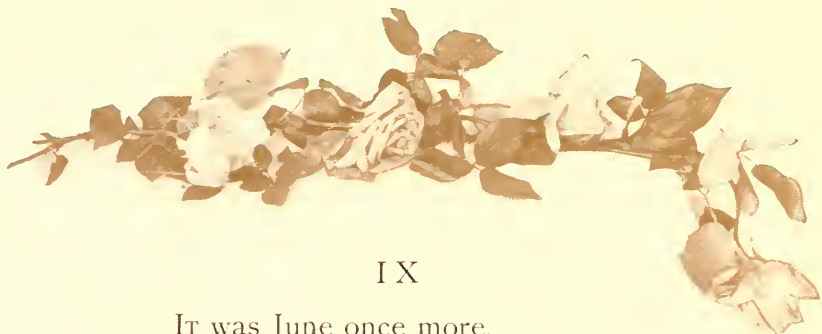


KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Throw them away—take them home—eat them—*anything!*”

But cabby, being a person of business principles, did none of these things: he sold them at the next corner to a sidewalk vender for fifty cents.





IX

It was June once more.

Burton had been in Washington for two days ; it was Tuesday evening now and his business was at last completed. He had earned a vacation, he told himself, and he meant to take it. Washington was maintaining its reputation for torridness, and when at the lunch-table an acquaintance had pictured a mile of cool green waves breaking on the shingle at Virginia Beach and had likened the sea-breezes there to a million electric fans, Burton had made up his mind on the instant. He would take the night boat for

KITTY OF THE ROSES

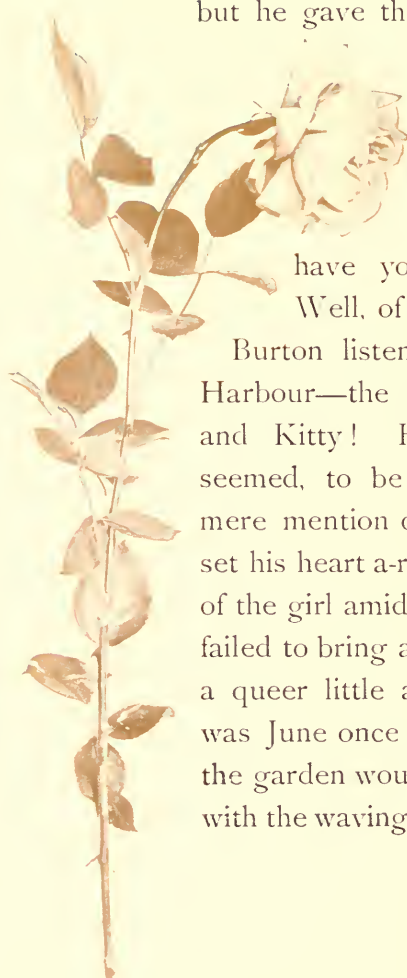
Hampton and spend the morrow by salt water; the thought of cleaving his way through gurgling, hissing combers was so enticing that the rest of the hot, humid afternoon was almost endurable.

He took the little steamer after dinner, just as the weary sun was sinking back of the miles of parched brick and fetid asphalt. He was tired, and he meant to go to bed early, but the deck was comparatively cool and the little box-like state-room was incomparably hot, and so darkness found him still smoking with his feet on the rail. Near at



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hand two men were talking lazily, but he gave them no heed until one said :



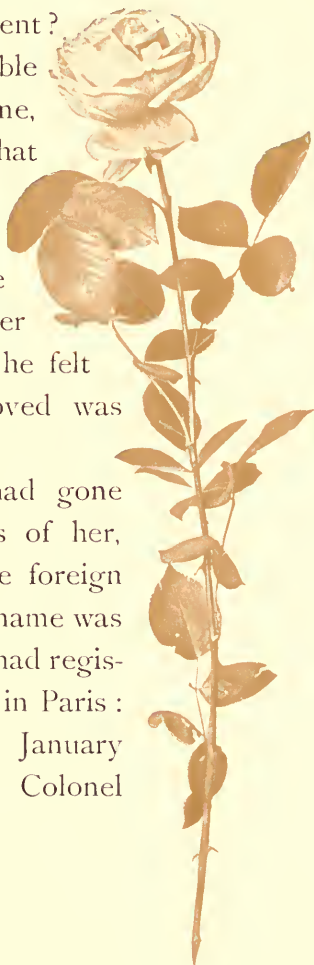
“ Belle Harbour?
Yes, over there where
you see the lights.
We stop there. Say,
have you ever been there?
Well, of all——”

Burton listened no longer. Belle Harbour—the Enchanted Garden—and Kitty! How long ago it all seemed, to be sure! And yet the mere mention of the sleepy old town set his heart a-racing and the memory of the girl amidst the roses still never failed to bring a frown to his brow and a queer little ache to his breast. It was June once more, he thought, and the garden would be gay and fragrant with the waving blooms, but Kitty——

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He dropped his feet from the rail and sat up suddenly in his deck chair. But *would* Kitty be absent? Wasn't it far more probable that she would be at home, there in the garden, now that rose-time had come? It was a long cry from Algiers to Virginia, and yet, as he gazed across the dark water to the few scattered lights, he felt certain that the girl he loved was there.

Only twice since she had gone abroad had he had tidings of her, though he had searched the foreign pages diligently. Once her name was among a list of persons who had registered at the *Herald* Bureau in Paris: that was in September. In January the paper had mentioned Colonel



KITTY OF THE ROSES

Simpson Barrett as having been a guest at a Government function given in Algiers to a visiting potentate. That was all. He had instructed Mrs. Phillips to advise him the instant the Colonel and his niece returned to Mary Street, but such advice had never come. And yet—and yet something seemed to tell him that Kitty was back among the roses, that the Castle once more held the Princess!

The steamer sidled across the black waste of water with a warning screech and much tinkling of bells. The lights on the wharves grew brighter and brighter. Burton tossed his cigarette into the wake and sought his state-room. Virginia Beach and rolling waves and sea-breezes were forgotten. The steamer bumped against the spiling and a voice droned:



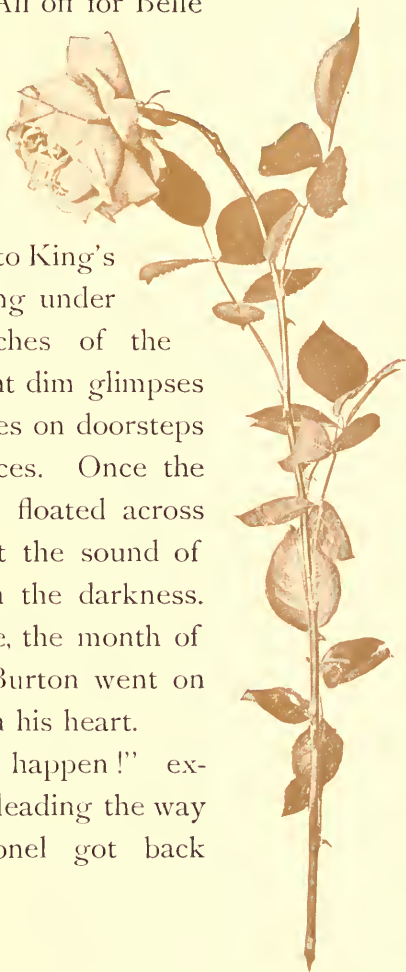
KITTY OF THE ROSES

“ Belle Harbour ! All off for Belle Harbour ! ”

A solitary figure, laden with suit-case and umbrella, strode down the gang-plank.

As Burton turned into King's Street and walked along under the motionless branches of the arching oaks he caught dim glimpses of white-gowned figures on doorsteps and heard young voices. Once the tinkling of a mandolin floated across the street, and with it the sound of a girl singing softly in the darkness. It was June once more, the month of roses and of love ! Burton went on with a new lightness in his heart.

“ How things do happen ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Phillips, leading the way upstairs. “ The Colonel got back



KITTY OF THE ROSES

yesterday, and I was just this minute hunting for pen and paper to write to you! Mr. Burton, that is surely a coincidence!"

"It is indeed, Mrs. Phillips. Er—I presume the Colonel brought his family back with him?"

"Well, now, sir, he hasn't got much family to bring, but he brought what he had—his niece, Miss Fletcher, you know."

"Ah, his niece? Indeed! There's nothing I shall want, thank you. I think I will go out again for a stroll. If you will ask the worthy Robert to remember my existence in the morning——"

Out under the oaks again, Burton lighted a pipe and set off in an aimless manner down King's Street. But



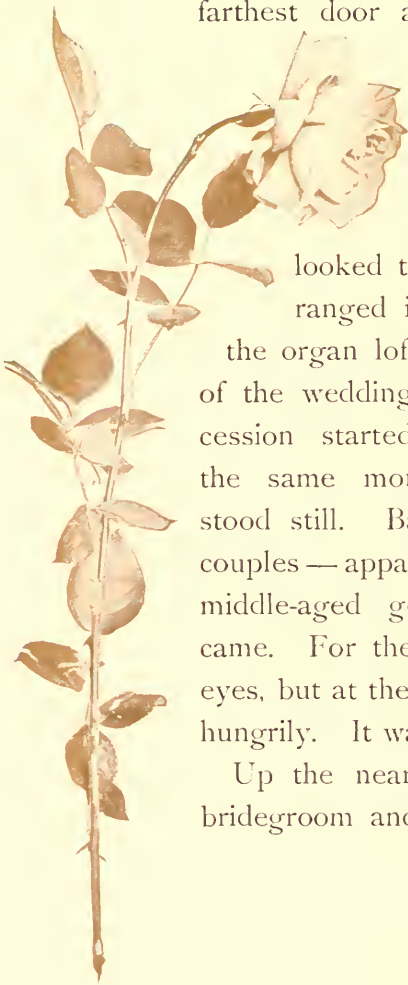
KITTY OF THE ROSES

at the first corner he turned to the right without hesitation. The third house held a solitary light. He stood for several moments across the way watching it, and then, humming a tune from sheer gladness, strolled on. At the next corner he again took the right-hand turning, and presently the tower of the old church arose, murky-white, against the starlit sky. The green, dotted with its crumbling tombstones, invited him in through the open gate. As he passed the church door he saw that the building was lighted, and simultaneously the sound of voices reached him. Wondering, he stepped noiselessly to a window and looked in.

A little group of men



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and girls were congregated near the farthest door and a second group stood beside the chancel. There was much talking, and what was said he could not hear. But as he looked the group at the door ranged itself in couples, from the organ loft came the first notes of the wedding-march, and the procession started up the aisle. At the same moment Burton's heart stood still. Back of the first three couples — apparently the ushers—a middle-aged gentleman and a girl came. For the man Burton had no eyes, but at the girl he gazed fixedly, hungrily. It was Kitty of the Roses!

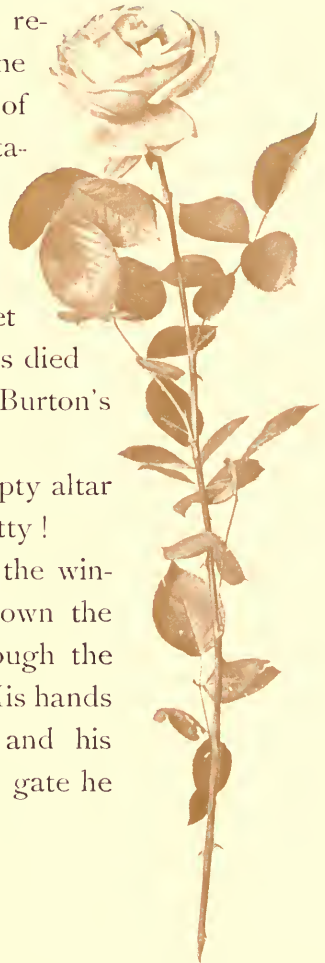
Up the nearer aisle marched the bridegroom and the best man. The

KITTY OF THE ROSES

organ's notes rose and sank. Burton, with a vague disquiet at his heart, watched frowningly. "A rehearsal," he told himself. The ushers turned at the end of the aisle and took up their stations. Bride and bridesmaids went slowly onward to the chancel; groom and best man advanced to meet them. Then the organ's notes died away and with them went Burton's happiness.

Side by side before the empty altar stood the bridegroom and Kitty!

Burton turned away from the window and stumbled blindly down the gravel driveway that led through the darkness to King's Street. His hands clinched themselves fiercely and his heart was like lead. At the gate he



KITTY OF THE ROSES

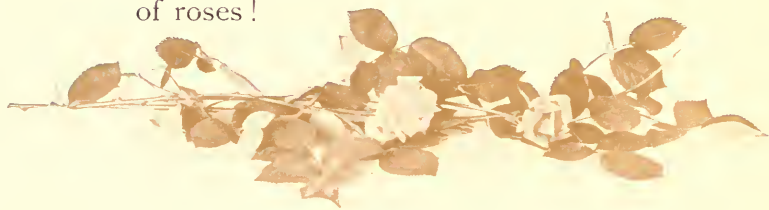
paused and relighted his pipe with fingers that trembled. Then he laughed softly and walked homeward.

“You’re too late, old man,” he muttered, “too late!”

When he was ready for bed he blew out the lamp and drawing a chair to the open window sat and smoked many pipes and looked miserably down onto the darkened rose-garden. In the Castle all lights were gone. The town was silent save for a distant whistle from the direction of the railroad or the occasional *cheep* of a circling bat.

“Kitty!” he murmured once, “Kitty!” Then he closed his lips resolutely, grimly, over the stem of his pipe.

God! how he hated the fragrance of roses!





X

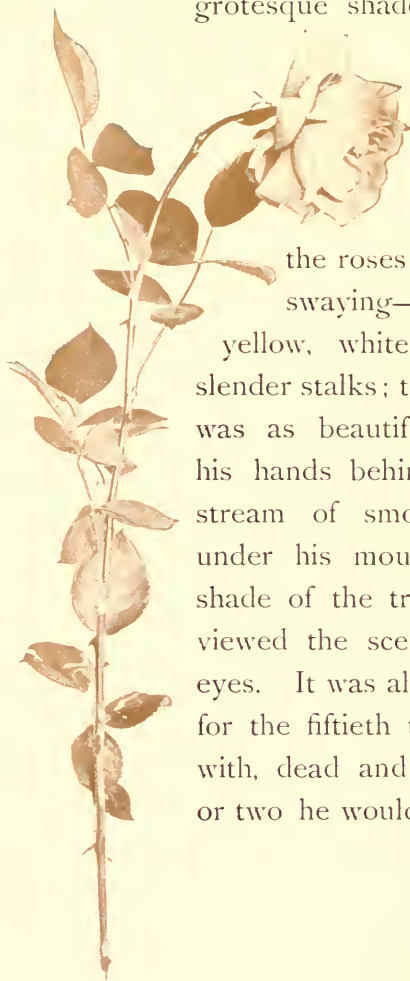
THE north-bound train left at eleven; his bag stood in the hallway; his watch said ten minutes of nine. Two dreary hours remained before he could shake the dust of Belle Harbour from his shoes for the last time.

There is a strain of morbidness in the most healthy of us and Burton was no exception. That, perhaps, is why, after vainly striving to find interest in the Washington morning paper, he lighted the inevitable cigarette and went out into the yard.

It might well have been a morning of a year ago; everything was un-

KITTY OF THE ROSES

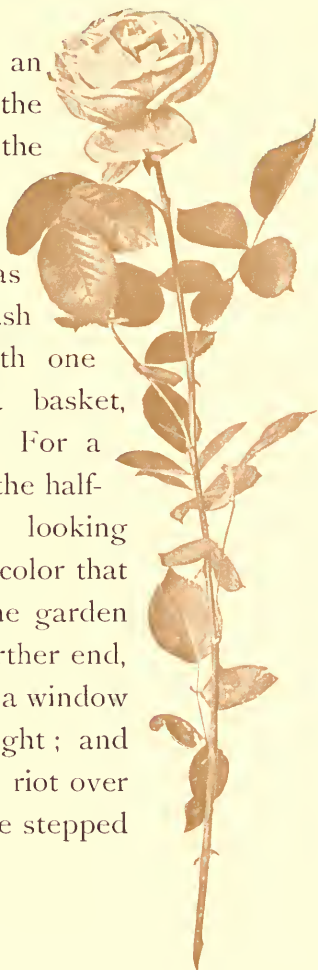
changed. The Daphne-tree threw its grotesque shadows on the turf; the iris bloomed along the old wall; the birds sang and called from the boughs; and beyond the iron fence the roses were courtesying and swaying—flares of pink and yellow, white and red—on their slender stalks; the Enchanted Garden was as beautiful as ever. Burton, his hands behind his back, a little stream of smoke curling up from under his moustache, stood in the shade of the tree in the corner and viewed the scene with unresponsive eyes. It was all over, he told himself for the fiftieth time—over and done with, dead and buried. In an hour or two he would put the memory of



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it out of his heart ; until then, though, what harm in——

There came the sound of an opening door from beyond the rose-garden. At the top of the steps stood a girl in a muslin gown and a broad-brimmed hat. The gown was caught at her waist with a sash of light blue ribbon. With one gloved hand she held a basket, with the other her skirts. For a moment she stood there in the half-shadow of the rose-vines looking thoughtfully over the sea of color that broke at her feet. Over the garden her gaze wandered to the farther end, to the neighboring house, to a window open to the morning sunlight ; and suddenly a flush of color ran riot over her cheeks, then faded. She stepped



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down to the path between the box hedges, and Burton, watching from beyond the fence, lost sight of her.

He contemplated retreat ; he even reached a point half way to the side door ; then he stole back, like a thief, to the shade of the Daphne-tree and waited there, his heart galloping and plodding by turns ; waited for just one more sight of her, for a word before he went away. He could hear the snipping of her scissors and, as often before, could catch a glimpse now and then of her hat above the bushes. He waited and tried to think of things to say, things which would tell nothing of his heart-sickness. And, ere he had prepared his speech of greeting, she turned the corner of the path and stood gazing full upon him.

She was surprised ; oh, yes, she



STOOD GAZING FULL UPON HIM

KITTY OF THE ROSES

must have been surprised, for the color came and went in her cheeks and her lips parted breathlessly as she bowed to him. Burton removed his hat and took a step towards the fence. But he said nothing ; nor did she ; and the next instant they were gazing at each other again in silence over the topmost leaves. Burton made a desperate effort ; he advanced to the fence and with a picket in each hand for support uttered a remark masterly in its originality, utter simplicity, and veracity,—

“ A lovely morning ? ”

“ Yes, ” she answered. The blushes were gone, leaving her clear, soft cheeks paler than before. She moved towards the fence until, had he stretched forth his hand, he could have almost touched her gown. She

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was the same Kitty, he thought with something of wonder ; a year had made no change in her that his eyes could discern. And yet—perhaps—she seemed graver, though not a whit less sweetly fair and gracious.

“A year makes little difference to a Princess,” he said smilingly.

“It leaves her a year older,” she answered.

“But perhaps, after all, it hasn't been a year. Perhaps it was only yesterday that you left me here and went up the path and into the Castle ; I could almost believe it.” She shook her head.

“Things have happened since then,” she replied with a little sigh. He echoed the sigh ; did not he know it?

“Yes, I suppose so. You've trav-



KITTY OF THE ROSES

elled much and seen many things since that morning.”

“Yes.” She showed no surprise that he should know.

“And——” But he stopped. “The Ogre is well, I trust?”

“Very well,” she answered with a laugh.

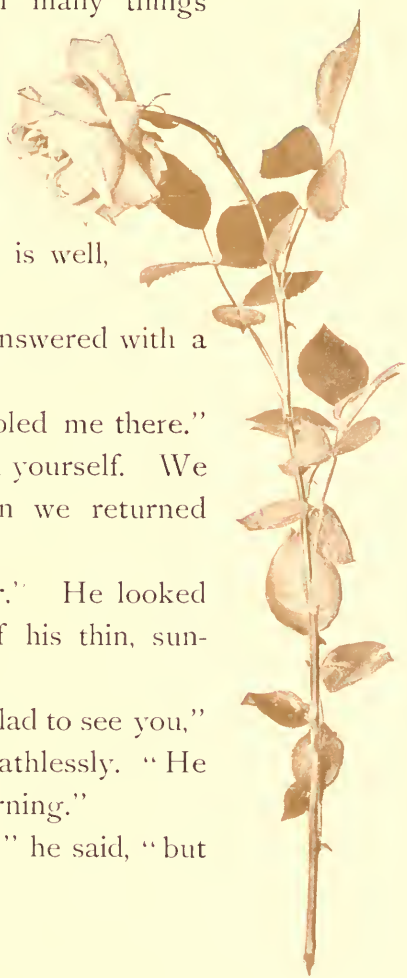
“You know you fooled me there.”

“Not I; you fooled yourself. We found your card when we returned yesterday.”

“Yes. I remember.” He looked thoughtfully at one of his thin, sun-burned hands.

“My uncle will be glad to see you,” she went on a little breathlessly. “He was saying so this morning.”

“You are very kind,” he said, “but



KITTY OF THE ROSES

I fear I can't give myself the pleasure of calling upon him this time. I am leaving for the North at eleven o'clock."

"Oh!" she said. There was silence between them. Then,—

"Are those for the church?" he asked, indicating the roses in the basket.

"The church?"

"Yes, the—the wedding is to-night, I presume?"

"Yes, to-night; but these are not for that. They are having a florist in Washington do the decorating."

"I see." He put a hand inside his serge coat and drew forth a pocket-book. From it he brought to light a flattened, crumbling rose. He held it forth, smiling bravely.

"I want you to accept this as a



KITTY OF THE ROSES

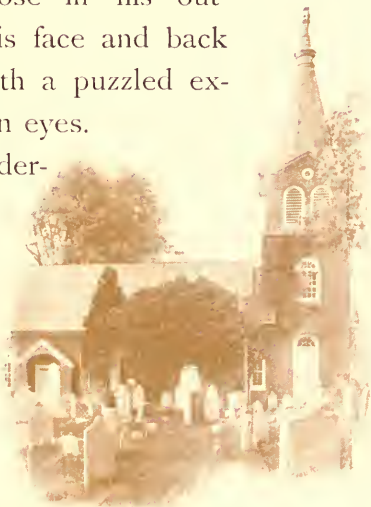
present," he said lightly. "It is no longer very lovely to look at, but"—with a bow of artificial gallantry—"it has been what I prized most in the world."

"A present?" she repeated, while a tinge of color crept into her cheeks. "You mean——"

"A wedding-present, yes." He wondered whether the smile on his face looked as ugly as it felt! She looked from the rose in his outstretched palm to his face and back again to the rose with a puzzled expression in her brown eyes.

"But I don't understand," she said.

"I beg your pardon," he answered gravely, "it was a poor joke." He



KITTY OF THE ROSES

began to slip the dried blossom back into his pocket-book.

“ But I will accept it,” she cried, and held forth a small hand. “ I will take it as a wedding-present, although it is somewhat ahead of time.”

He placed it in her hand, looking, in turn, puzzled.

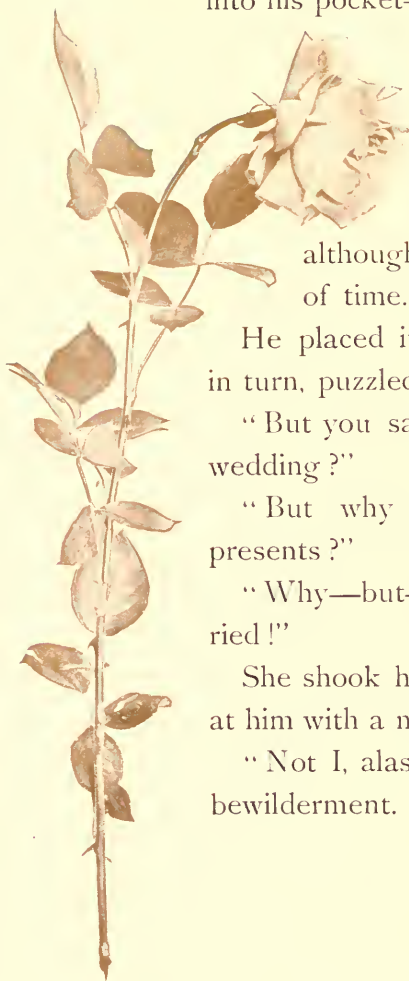
“ But you said it was to-night—the wedding ?”

“ But why should you give me presents ?”

“ Why—but—you’re to be married !”

She shook her head, smiling across at him with a new light in her eyes.

“ Not I, alas !” He stared back in bewilderment.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

"But I saw! I looked in the window last night!"

"And you thought I was the bride?" She laughed deliciously. "Didn't you know that it was bad luck for a bride to take part in a rehearsal? I was only a substitute, you see."

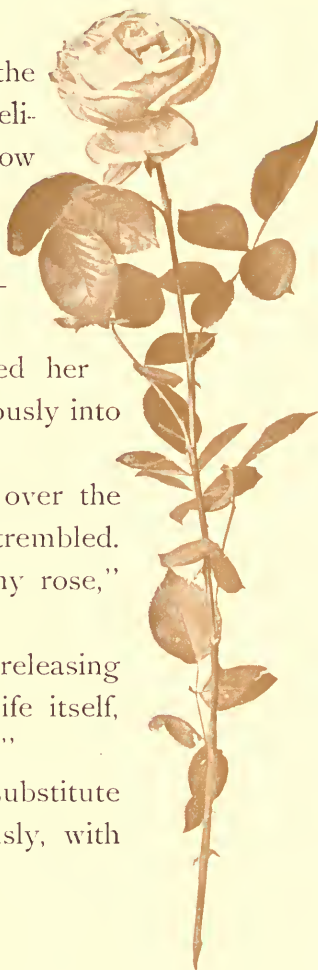
"Kitty!" He had seized her hand and was gazing rapturously into her eyes. "Kitty!"

The lids fluttered down over the brown depths. The hand trembled.

"You—you're crushing my rose," she whispered.

"Kitty!" he cried again, releasing her hand as though it were life itself, "tell me again that it's true!"

"True that I was only a substitute bride?" she asked tremulously, with



KITTY OF THE ROSES

hidden eyes. "Yes, it's quite true, sadly true." She looked up with an attempt at exaggerated woe, but when she saw his face she averted her own again and gave all her attention to the crushed rose in her hand. "I—I must be going now," she said.

"Going? No, you musn't go!" he cried.

"I must," she murmured from the safe distance of a yard away. "Good-by."

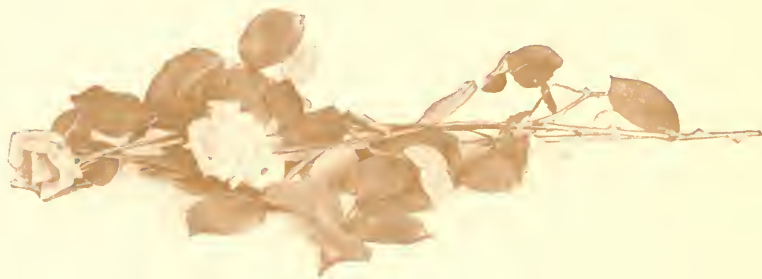
"Good-by?"

"You are going North, are you not?" she asked innocently.

"North? I? Never!"

"Oh!" said Kitty.

"North!" he repeated witheringly. "I'm not such an idiot! I lost you twice, Kitty, and now—now I'm not going to let you out of my sight!"



KITTY OF THE ROSES

"I fear you'll have to," she laughed, with a shake of her head, "at least as far as the house."

"I shall follow!"

"You mustn't."

"But you said your uncle——"

"He won't be at home until dinner-time."

Burton groaned.

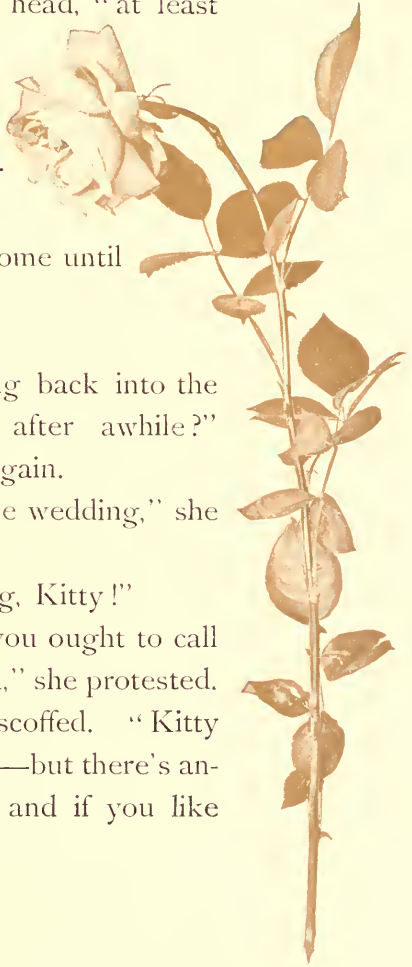
"But you're coming back into the garden, aren't you, after awhile?" She shook her head again.

"No, you forget the wedding," she answered.

"Hang the wedding, Kitty!"

"I—J don't think you ought to call me Kitty so—so much," she protested.

"Don't you?" he scoffed. "Kitty—Kitty—Kitty! But—but there's another name I know, and if you like



KITTY OF THE ROSES

I'll call you that—Kitty; shall I?
May I tell you what it is—Kitty?"

"No, I—I don't think so," she answered in sudden alarm. She moved away as though meditating flight. "Good-by," she said again.

"But it's not good-by," he pleaded. "I may come this evening, mayn't I?"

"If you are not afraid of the Ogre," she laughed.

She moved farther.

"Kitty," he called softly.

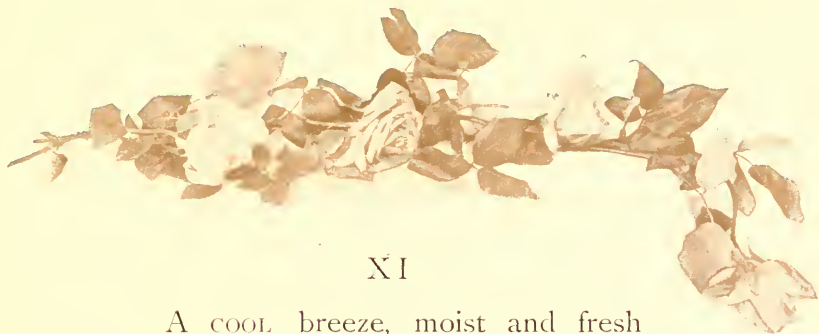
"Yes?"

"It begins with an S!"

"It?—Oh!"

She fled to the house.





XI

A cool breeze, moist and fresh from the river, was blowing across the garden, stirring the leaves to sleepy rustlings and wafting the fragrance of thousands of roses into the evening air. There was no light save the soft radiance of the stars ; no sound save their voices as they strolled slowly back and forth between the hedges and swaying blossoms.

“ A confession ? ” he was saying.

“ Yes,” she answered. “ I wonder if you will absolve me ? ”

“ Kitty—— ”

KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Wait until you hear,” she advised solemnly. “There was a paper.”

“A paper?”

“Yes, I found it on the path that first morning. It must have blown through the fence, you see. I picked it up; I didn't know what it was. Afterwards, in the house, I found it in among the roses and—and I saw something on it that made me—made me read it. Was it frightfully wrong?”

“Wrong? No, but what was it?”

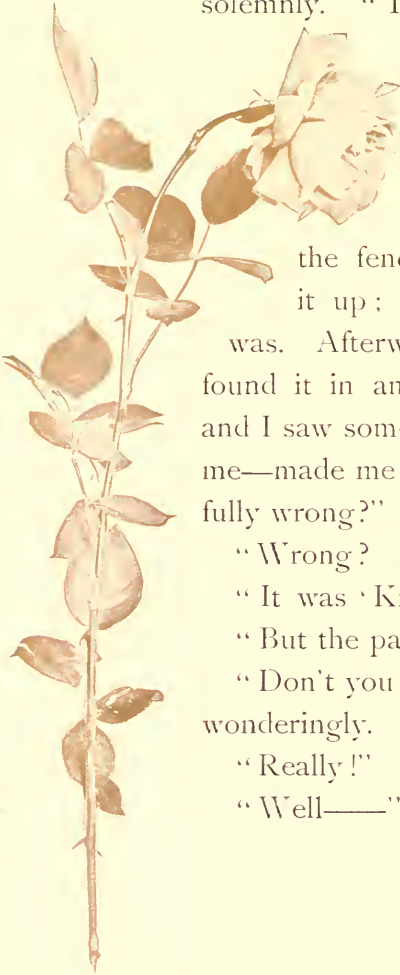
“It was ‘Kitty’!”

“But the paper?”

“Don't you remember?” she asked wonderingly. “Really?”

“Really!”

“Well——” She took something



KITTY OF THE ROSES

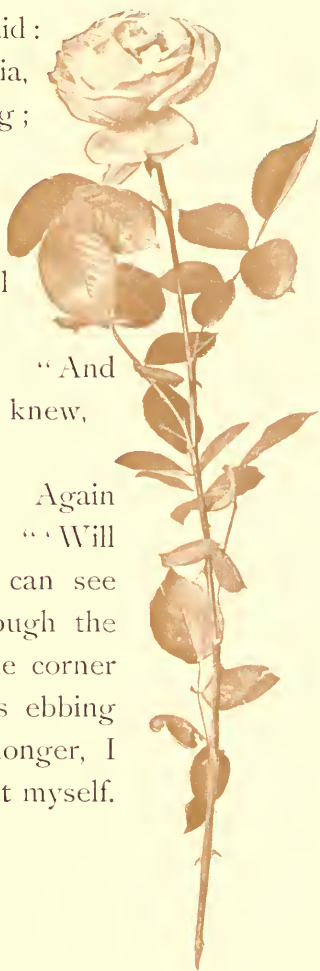
from the bosom of her dress and spread it out in the half-darkness.

Then, "Listen," she said:

"Belle Harbour, Virginia, June the third. She's coming; she's almost in sight. I don't quite know what I am writing. The situation grows intense. Will she——"

"I remember!" he cried. "And you found that? And you knew, then, that——"

"Listen," she said sternly. Again she bent over the paper. "Will she retreat or advance? I can see the white of her gown through the leaves. She is almost at the corner of the path. My courage is ebbing fast; if she delays much longer, I shall beat a disordered retreat myself.



KITTY OF THE ROSES

Now! She's coming, coming, coming—she's here——' ”

“Kitty,” he cried, “you're not reading! You couldn't in this light.”

“I don't need to,” she said with a little, soft laugh, “I know it by heart. ‘Had I the courage I would ask for a parley, but, alas! I am already wavering along my entire line; I can only put up a brave front and rely upon awing her. She is delicious, simply delicious. Her eyes——’ What about my eyes? You stopped there.”

“Your eyes? Your eyes—your eyes——” He paused, at a loss for words: She sighed dolefully.

“There, you've stopped again! I reckon I'll never know,” she mourned.

He took her hands and turned her about until the light of the stars was full upon her face.



“AND ME, KITTY?” HE WHISPERED

KITTY OF THE ROSES

“Your eyes, Kitty—ah, I’ll spend my life, sweetheart, telling you about your eyes!” They dropped before his own ardent ones. “Was it—was it then, Kitty?” he whispered.

“What?” she murmured.

“That you cared for me?”

“I—I think so!”

With sudden shyness she broke from his clasp and went forward up the path. When he caught up with her she was bending with her face almost buried in a great cup-like rose. He stooped and placed his cheek against hers and their hands met and caught.

“Ah, dear, dear roses,” she murmured tremulously, “how I love you, how I love you!”

“And me, Kitty?” he whispered in her ear.

KITTY OF THE ROSES

She raised her head and laid her hands upon his arms, looking up silently into his face. About them the roses whispered and nodded in the breeze. He bent until his lips were upon hers.

“Kitty,” he cried softly, “my Kitty! Kitty of the Roses!”



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